How I Tell The Bible Stories To My Sunday School

Vol. I

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to my Sunday school
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How I Tell the Bible Stories to My Sunday School

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vol. 1

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY GRADUATE UNION LIBRARY 1961

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FOREWORD

AS I have shown in my Catechetics (pp. 464—471), the whole Second Course of the Sunday school (ages 8—13) should occupy itself with one and the same Biblical narrative, which, as related in the Lesson Helps to be put into the hands of the children, should be adapted to the needs of the various grades through which the children successively pass. At the same time, however, the leader of the Sunday school should vividly and penetratingly tell the story for the respective Sunday to the entire Second Course, including all the grades which it comprises. For there is nothing that makes such a lasting impression upon the soul of the child and that so enduringly arouses its moral and religious interest as a good, concrete narrative told vividly and with an appeal to the intuitional side of the child's mind. Says G. Stanley Hall, "Of all the things that a teacher should know how to do, the most important, without exception, is to know how to tell a story". To the leader of the Sunday school the narratives contained in this volume are, therefore, offered for the purpose of aiding him in the fulfillment of this important task. They grew out of the practical work which I undertook to do in the interest of my students by assuming the role of leader in the Sunday school of our St. John's congregation here at Dubuque. What was there given orally, took on the form of written narratives during the summer and autumn of the present year, and these written narratives are now, by request of our Sunday School Committee, offered in this printed volume. The "presentation" in the Sunday school must differ from that in the parochial or confirmation school to the extent that in the former instance those elaborations

which in the latter instance are reserved for the "penetration" and "application" are at once interwoven with the "presentation", as far as possible, since the Sunday school leaves no room for a separate stage of "penetration" and "application" in the treatment of the Biblical story, or since, at least, neither the "penetration" nor the "application" is likely to be treated satisfactorily by the teachers of the individual classes. It has been my endeavor to meet these requirements. Those who wish to inform themselves more minutely with regard to the principles which guided me in the narration of these Biblical stories, are referred to my Catechetics, pp. 518—532. Let me, however, repeat here once more that every story, after the leader of the Sunday school has finished his rather free and amplified narrative, should be referred to the teachers of the individual classes and, under their supervision, read by the children, each of which is supposed to be supplied with a copy of the Lesson Helps. The children are now able to understand the text of the story as given in the Lesson Helps, and let it be understood that all free, extemporaneous narration of the story must finally lead back to the Scriptural text, with its quiet dignity and fixed objectivity.

While this book had been primarily planned to serve the leader of the Sunday school, the Sunday School Committee, at the same time, wished by its publication to offer our class teachers a suitable manual, which they might use in preparing for their work, and the diligent use of which would enable them to do their work in the individual classes more effectively than heretofore. This imposed upon the author the duty of being somewhat more elaborate than the first purpose of the book would have warranted. But the leader of the Sunday school will easily see where he may abbreviate the narrative. The Sunday school should last for an hour and a quarter, in which case neither the leader nor the class teachers will be crowded.

This first volume, which offers, in elaborated narratives, the stories contained in the first volume of my "Wartburg Lesson Helps for Ev. Luth. Sunday Schools", is to be followed by a second volume within a year from now, and this will contain the stories of the second volume of the Lesson Helps. Where reference is made to Biblical pictures, the writer had in mind those contained in his own Sunday school publications.

Although this volume is chiefly intended for use in the Sunday schools, and will best serve those which have introduced my Lesson Helps, it may be claimed that any pastor or teacher will find it helpful in giving instruction in Biblical history, all the more because it is the first Lutheran attempt in the English language to offer the Bible Stories in this form.

At present, no German edition of this book is planned. For the work of translating the German manuscript into the language of our country, I am indebted to the dexterity and the indefatigable diligence of my old friend, the Rev. Herman Brueckner, A.M., of Iowa City, Iowa. May the work that we have conjointly done to serve our Church in these serious times be attended by God's blessing.

M. Reu.

Dubuque, Iowa, November, 1918.

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1. How God Created the World.

I wonder whence everything came that we can see, heaven and earth, the air and the great waters, with all that lives and moves therein? Many people say that it all came of itself, that at first there was only a germ, and that out of this all things developed, as the large apple-tree gradually develops out of the tiny apple-seed. It may be that the origin of the world was thus explained to you in the public schools. But what puzzles me is how the germ got here out of which the world is said to have developed. We know the source of the apple-seed; but who can tell me the source of the germ out of which the world is supposed to have grown forth? Some people will tell you that this germ always existed, that there never was a time when it did not exist, that it originated out of itself. But that is strange, since today nothing originates thus. Before there can be a house there must be people to build it, before there can be a table a carpenter is needed who knows how to manufacture such furniture, before there can be a plant, however small, we must have the seed from which it springs; and here we are told that not only this world in which we live and which is indeed great and rich and wonderful enough, but also the germ out of which it grew, came of itself. Let others believe this, I do not believe it. The devout and learned astronomer Athanasius Kircher had a friend who also belonged to those smart people that say, "There is no God, the world came of itself." Now, Kircher had bought himself an artificial globe, a masterful piece of work, upon which the whole earth, with all its mountains and rivers, and even the sky with its stars, was shown in splendid relief. When his infidel friend, who visited

him one day, saw this piece of work, he exclaimed in tones of wonder and admiration, "Whence came this masterful globe, and who made it?" Kircher answered, "I do not know; it must have come into being of itself, by mere chance." This answer made his friend angry, and he said, "Do not tell me such foolishness, as if a piece of work like this could have come of itself; for that is impossible." Kircher then confronted his unbelieving friend, looked into his eyes and said, "You call it foolishness to assert that this globe of wood and paper came to be by chance; but what is it if you assert that this whole world was not made by anyone, that it came into existence by mere chance, that it originated out of itself? Is it not the greatest kind of foolishness to say that this little thing must have been made by some one, and at the same time to maintain that this immense world, in all its artistic beauty and grandure, came of itself, ows its origin to mere chance?" To this his learned friend could make no reply; for it was clear that somebody must have made the world, that its origin can not be explained by saying, "It came of itself." Children, let us also remember this.

But who was in existence before the world, and who made it in all its greatness and in all its wonderful splendor? If we want to know this, if we desire to learn all about it, and that, too, from a sure and reliable source, then we must look into the Bible, in which God Himself speaks to us, so that we gain from it the most reliable information in regard to everything that is necessary to live happily and to die without fear of the beyond. The Bible, however, begins with these words: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Here it tells us that it was God who made the world, here it also relates to us how He made it. Is it not interesting, to find out how God made this great and beautiful world, which is so marvelous in design, so replete with the most wonderful works, that up to this day

all wise people in the world have been making a study of it, and yet will not be able to fathom all its wonders, even if they continue their studies to the end of the world? Let me tell you then, according to the Holy Scriptures, **how God made the world.**

Once there was a time when there were no flowers and no trees, no animals and no people; when there was no earth and no blue sky overhead; when, in short, there was nothing save God alone. He was before all time and will be when what we call time shall have ceased. He differs from all other beings in that He never had a beginning; nor will He ever end. That is why we call Him the eternal God and say with the Psalmist, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God." God could have His being before there was a heaven and an earth, because He is not flesh and blood as we are; He is spirit and needs no place of habitation. So it was before all time that God said to Himself, the Father to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, "I will create a world, with happy and blissful people living upon it, related to Us as children to their father, capable of communing with us and having us commune with them, thus finding true joy and contentment." And hardly had He resolved to do this when He already said, "Let there be a world!" And immediately a world came into existence; for God is not only eternal, without beginning or end, but also omnipotent, having power to do whatsoever He pleases. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast. He is the only being that can create things by merely saying the word; as for us, we all have to work and exert ourselves, and even then we do not always accomplish what we desire; with God it is different, He only needs to say what He wants done, and it is done. He is even able to make something out of nothing, while we must have material if

we want to make anything: thus, the taylor needs cloth, the carpenter wood, the mason stones; God can also create the material out of which things are made, and all this simply by His word. Oh, how great and mighty our God must be!

Thus the visible and the invisible world had come into existence by the word of God, not only our earth, but the whole boundless space in which today the sun and the moon and the many stars, as mighty spheres, are coursing, some of them being much larger than the earth, all that is above and under the earth.

But how did the world look which God thus created by His word at the beginning of all time? It was not yet the present world, so full of beauty and splendor; it was but the matter out of which God formed and modeled this beautiful world. The Bible speaks of the earth in particular, saying that it was void and without form. Earth and water were still mixed together, thus looking like a big slough; and dense, impenetrable fog rested upon it, and the thickest darkness spread over everything, for as yet there was no light. Had the earth remained thus, it would have been impossible for any plant to grow, for any animal to live, for any human being to dwell upon it. But it was not to remain in such a condition; for God had decided to build a world that should be a real master-piece, a veritable monument of His unlimited power and wisdom. That God had the intention of making a really great world out of the matter which He had created, is indicated by the statement that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; He would see to it that everything became good and beautiful.

And so it was indeed. All at once God said, "Let there be light," and immediately there was light. Again only a word was needed to make the light flash up in the darkness. If we only could have witnessed that sight! It is delightful enough now, when night is past and the first rays of light become visible. But we are so used to the sight that we often

pay no attention to it. Here it was for the first time that flashes of light shot through the darkness round about and covered everything with a golden hue. God then divided the light from the darkness, calling the light day and the darkness night. So there was still to be darkness on the earth, but only at stated times; it was to change off with the light. Oh, how wisely God arranged it so; for the life of plants, animals and man needs both light and darkness, with the proper alternation. Without light there can be no life at all, as may be seen by the potatoes in the cellar; if they begin to sprout in the spring, all the sprouts grow in the direction of the window that lets in the light. The same thing is noticed in the flowers standing near the window; their leaves and blossoms always turn toward the light. And have you never watched what happens when any kind of seed is planted in the ground and sprouts in a downward direction? The sprout at once starts to turn about, in order to reach the top where the light is. Thus everything needs light if it is to grow and thrive; and yet, it would not be good if darkness did not return at night, since the stillness of night affords plants, animals and people the proper time to gather new strength.

Light and darkness may be present with proper alternation, but that does not imply the presence of life and growth. Along with the light there must be air. God knew that, too, long before we found it out. So on the second day He made the air. Upon it the heavy masses of fog were lifted up from the earth over which they were hanging, and by it they were held up there, as the roof of the house is held up by the pillars. Now the waters contained in the masses of fog were gathered into clouds overhead, and could not come down any more to the waters below, since the air had taken its place between them and thus formed a wall of division. And yet, this wall of division, formed by the air, was so constituted that a connection between the waters above and those

below was possible. The moisture evaporating on the earth rose up high to form clouds, and from there it came down to the earth again in the form of dew and rain. This great work God again accomplished by His word; for He said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters," and no sooner had He said so than the division of the waters was effected. The waters above the firmament were by the air divided from the water below the firmament. And God called the air, which, like a wall of division, kept the waters apart, and, like a row of pillars that hold up the roof of a house, bore the waters over-head, heaven. This, therefore, is not the heaven concerning which we say that God dwells therein. The heaven which is the dwelling of God is not located anywhere within the visible world.

Raising the masses of fog and gathering them into clouds did not have the effect of making the earth dry; water and earth, as a murky mixture, still surged to and fro. Had this condition become permanent, the earth, although light and air were present, would not have been a suitable dwelling-place for man, whom God intended to create. God therefore brought about another division. This time it was not a matter of dividing light and darkness, or the upper from the lower waters, but the waters on the earth itself. He said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." And at once there began a mighty movement in the interior of the earth. Mountains, amid terrible rumbling, arose out of the deep, some of them, like the Rocky Mountains in the western and the Alleghany Mountains in the eastern part of our land, the Alps in Switzerland and the Himalaya Mountains in India, many thousand feet high. Sometimes the top of a mountain was abruptly broken off; large masses of rock, like little mountains, rolled down into the depths with a great noise. In other places the earth opened and cavities were formed, some of a yawning depth, some not so

deep. Instantly the waters began to collect in these mighty basins. Brooks, rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans were formed. The greater part of the earth became covered with water. Out of this the dry land with its heights and depths arose. The water indeed flooded the land again, as if it wanted to re-occupy its former place; but God made the earth solid and set the sea its bounds, saying, "So far shalt thou go and no farther; here shall thy proud waves be calmed." And the sea had to obey His will, receding to the place that He had assigned to it.

Now the earth already looked quite different. What was to be divided and separated was divided and separated: light and darkness, the waters above and those below, the sea and the solid land. A bound was set for each division, and the various regions were marked off in which all the creatures that God intended to create were to live and move and have their being. And still the third day's work was not finished. Rugged and bare the giant mountains raised their heads out of the water, naked and gray were the mountain slopes, like plowed land appeared the valleys and the plains. God was not going to leave them this way very long. He saw that there was no blade of grass, no covering of sod, no plant, no tree; so He hastened to dress the naked earth. He said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, herbs and fruit-bearing trees." As a result, grass and flowers, mosses and mushrooms, bushes and trees grew out of the ground. The gray plains bedecked themselves with a rich covering of sod; here bushes and hedges sprang up and there a little forest was formed. There were fruit-trees and forest-trees of every kind. Thus something entirely new had entered God's creation. What God had made until now remained as it was; mountains, rocks and stones do not grow. But plants grow, thrive, have blossoms and bear fruit; there is life in them. Out of the dead earth they draw the materials upon which they thrive, transforming them into vital juice. And what a rich

life they contain within themselves! A single poppy sheds as many as 30,000 seeds; in 5 years the whole earth could be covered with poppies raised from the multiplied seed of a singly poppy plant. And how tenacious the life of some plants is! Oak trees have been known to thrive for 500 years before they began to die. Each plant had to yield its own seed, in order to propagate its kind. Today about 40,000 different kinds of plants have been listed. All this stood clearly before God's eyes, all was designed by Him, the form, the growth, and the decay of every species of plant. Truly, children, our God is a great God, and in the whole wide world there is no being that equals Him. That about which all learned men in all generations have been spinning their theories, without producing one which offers a satisfactory explanation for the origin and existence of the world, that God, in His wisdom and power, called into existence by simply speaking the word.

In the first three days of creation God thus divided and separated things, at the same time marking off the great regions in which the creature yet to be created were to live, move and have their being. From the fourth to the sixth day of creation He filled these regions with bodies and with different kinds of living creatures. He first directed His attention to the region above and said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and seasons, and days, and years." And it was so. For then it happened that the sun, the moon and many stars, all of them mighty spheres, went coursing through the boundless space (picture!). As a balloon floats unsupported through the air, so these great round bodies float in space without any visible support. Heavy as they are, they do not drop down; and many as they are, they do not collide, but each pursues exactly the course which God assigned to it. The sun is 1,280,000 times as large as the earth, but the moon is much smaller than the earth,

being only one fiftieth its size. To us, the sun and the moon appear as if they nearly equalled each other in their proportions, but that is because the moon is much nearer the earth than the sun. The sun is like a mighty sea of fire. With exceedingly large telescopes the rising of huge pillars of fire have been observed on the sun. Around it the earth revolves in great compressed circles. If it ever came too near the sun, everything upon its surface would be burned; but God in His wisdom so determined the course of the earth that it always stays just far enough away from the sun to receive from its fire warmth and light, yet without being consumed by it. In the sun, the moon and the stars the light that God created on the first day of creation is, as it were, concentrated; they are now the mighty luminaries that furnish light for the whole world. The stars which look so small to us are also large spheres. Most of them are larger than the earth, some of them as large as the sun, and some even larger still. And how numerous they are! Or canst thou count the stars that twinkle, all lit up by God's own hand? By means of the very largest telescopes men have estimated that about 500 million stars can be observed from the earth. But how would it be if we could ascend to one of the stars high above us and make observations from there? We would, if this were possible, discover other millions of stars. God only knows how many there are in all; He alone has counted them. O children, are you not beginning to see how great and wise our God must be if He made all this, if He brought all these countless millions of stars into existence by a single word? That is why the great astronomer Newton always took off his hat when the name of God was mentioned. For the same reason the celebrated astronomer Kepler closed his book on the world of the stars with these words: "I thank Thee, my Creator and Lord, that Thou hast given me this sense of rapture, which I experience as I contemplate the works of Thy hands." Sun, moon and stars are the mighty

heralds proclaiming the greatness and power of God; even when people no longer want to believe in His greatness and power these mighty heralds continue to proclaim them, much more forcefully than any human tongue could do it. The sun and the moon are also the world's great clock, regulating the various periods of time for all of us. When the earth has completed its course around the sun, then a year is ended; when the moon has finished its circuit around the earth, we call that a month; according to the varying nearness of the earth to the sun, we distinguish between the four seasons, spring, summer, autumn and winter; as the earth turns on its axis once every 24 hours, it is day where the rays of the sun fall upon the earth, and night where the earth is turned away from the sun. Verily, when the fourth day of creation was ended, a mighty region had been made to contain innumerable bodies, moving through space with the regularity of a perfect clock. This was the region of the heavens above us.

On the fifth day of creation God filled and enlivened the waters, and the space between the earth and the high heavens above, with living creatures. For He said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and let fowl fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." And in response to His word the waters were enlivened by fish and other kinds of aquatic beings, both large and small, from the little goldfish to the large whale, which sometimes gets to be longer than many a church, and by which big boats may be thrown out of their course. Under the dome of heaven flew all sorts of birds, from the tiny wren to the mighty eagle, which spreads its wings so far apart as to measure many feet in width. There are about 13,000 different species of birds, and 12,000 species of fish; it is said that in a single drop of water there are no less than 64 million of living animals. Canst thou count the insects

dancing in the joyous summer sun? Canst thou count the swallows glancing past us on their airy run? And the fishes as they scurry through the waters clear and cold, can their number in a hurry be with any sureness told? No, they are practically without number. Then, too, how manifold they are! What variety of colors the birds have! Only think of the many colored butterfly! Some birds have extra fine plumage, which is the delight of our eyes, while others bring joy to our hearts by their sweet melodies. We can not but marvel when we think of all this, and laud the Creator, exclaiming, "To God all praise and glory!"

On the sixth day of creation animals were added that inhabit the land, so that this third domain, the land, might also be occupied and filled with life. Like the birds of the air and the fish in the water, these inhabitants of the solid land represent all sizes, from that of the little worm to that of the big elephant; and, as you may have heard, there was a time when there were animals that even surpassed the elephant in size. They tell us that in all not less than 600,000 different kinds of animals have been found. As God made every plant to bear seed of its own kind, in order that the different kinds might multiply and preserve their species, so He also made provision for the increase and preservation of the different types of animal life, which He had created on the fifth and on the sixth day, respectively. For He said to them, "Be fruitful, and multiply!" That is why they exist up to the present time and will continue to exist until the end of the world. This word of God, "Be fruitful, and multiply", stays in force through all the thousands of years; so there is nothing more powerfully productive in heaven and on earth than God and his word. Thus all the realms of creation were filled and enlivened. When we think of it, we can not but fold our hands and say with the Psalmist, "How manifold are Thy works, O Lord; in wisdom hast Thou made them all, and

the earth is full of Thy goodness." God Himself was well pleased with His work, and said to Himself, "It is all good; everything answers its purpose, and is just as I wanted it to be."

Yes, all works of God, which He had thus far created, bore witness of His glory, of His power and wisdom. By the sun that like a monarch ruled the day, and by the army of stars that came forth at night, by the mountains whose lofty peaks reached to the clouds, and the worm creeping in the dust of the earth, one could tell that He who made them is an infinitely rich and wonderful God. But now God was about to advance still another step and create a being more glorious than all creatures on the earth, a being that should reflect His own image; He was about to create man, a being able to think, to speak, to feel, to will, a being righteous and holy, a being fit to crown the whole work of creation, and to be lord over all the earth. For thus spoke God the Father to the Son and the Holy Ghost: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." This was something extraordinary; for all other creatures God simply called into existence, without forming a special resolution. But even more must this be said of what God now did to produce man. It was something altogether new and unique. He did not simply speak the word, and have man come into being all complete, but formed him in a peculiar way. Out of the moist dust of the earth He molded the human body, with all its members; nothing was omitted from the foot to the head, from the outward to the inward, the eye and the heart also were there, with all their wonderful parts and connections. For the time being, the form was still lifeless, but God then breathed His life-breath into it, and now life, like a current, swept through the legs, the arms, the head, the whole body; it looked out through the eyes and beheld God with a look of

gratitude. The animals also were alive; but the life-giving breath that swept through them differed from the life that God imparted to man in this particular: God made His own spirit to dwell in man; thus man became a creature able to think, feel and will, to give expression to his thoughts in language, and thus also to make manifest his emotions and assert his will. Made to stand erect, he with his eyes did not look down to the ground, but up to God; with him God could speak, and in his presence He could express what moved His heart. As God was a person, so was man; as God was righteous and holy, so was he; as God was Lord over heaven and earth, including man, so was man destined to be lord over all the earth; he was not God but man, not creator but a creature; but he was an earthly image of the Creator, a being made in the likeness of God. With his body he belonged to the earth, of which his body was formed; with his spirit he belonged to God, for God is spirit. Thus he was the connecting link between heaven and earth, between God and the world, the spirit of God Himself being in him.

Beyond this God did not want to go. With the creation of man the world came to its completion. Once more God now looked upon what He had made, and had to say to Himself, "The work that I undertook to do is well done; the whole creation is good, very good." He therefore stopped creating. And now the seventh day began, the great day of rest upon which God rested from all His work. Not in the sense that He was tired, even as we are tired after we have been working, nor in the sense that henceforth He did nothing more, for He sustained and governed the world, as He sustains and rules it now; but in the sense that from now on He did not create anything new. The work was finished, the world was complete, so much so, that it everywhere gives evidence of His power and wisdom. If we reflect on this wonderful work of God's power and wisdom, instead of wil-

fully closing our eyes to it, we can not but join the poet in exclaiming:

When I Thy might and wisdom see
Revealed in all creation;
When of Thy love it speaks to me
In hours of meditation,
Then I Thy wondrous glory feel
And, over-awed, devoutly kneel
To worship Thee, Creator!

2. How God Made the First Human Pair Happy.

Who made all things that we can see on this earth, Anna? To be sure, God made them all. "He only is the Maker of all things near and far; He paints the wayside flower, He lights the evening star; the winds and waves obey Him, by Him the birds are fed; much more to us, His children, He gives our daily bread." That is why we call God the Creator of all things and say in the First Article, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth." The last time I told you how God created the world, first calling into existence the material out of which the world was to be formed, and then, in six days, forming the world as it now appears by simply speaking the word, and giving expression to His will. In the course of these six days He first divided what was not to stay together: light and darkness, the waters above and those below the firmament, land and sea. Then He covered the earth with grass and herbs and fruitful trees, placed sun, moon and stars in the firmament overhead, filled the air with birds, the water with fishes and the solid land with all kinds of animals. Thus the air, the water and the land did not only exist as such, but they were also filled and enlivened. Last but not least, He created man, the most perfect of all creatures; man was the very crown of creation;

in man God combined all the glory of the world; yea, in man His own image was reflected, he being able to think, feel and will, to speak and act with intelligence, unlike all other creatures in this visible world, and endowed with righteousness and holiness. But God did not only call man into existence, and endow him with such glorious gifts; no, He also took further interest in him and made him altogether happy. So today I must tell you how God effected the perfect happiness of the first human being. Yes, **how God made the first man happy,** is what you are now to learn.

When God created the world, He also made a very beautiful garden. The whole earth was beautiful, but this garden had a beauty that distinguished it from all others. You may have seen many a beautiful garden, but none that was so large and so beautiful as this one. There are no such gardens anymore in the whole wide world. It was called Paradise, which means garden of joy; for it was a joy to be and to live in this garden. It contained the most beautiful trees. There were forest-trees, lending cool, refreshing shade, and there were fruit-trees, bearing the most palatable kinds of fruit. And how many, many flowers grew in Paradise! They blossomed so profusely and were so fragrant as to fill the heart with sheer delight. Never again have there been such flowers anywhere. The garden also abounded in all kinds of animals, from the small mouse to the large lion, called the king of animals; and merry birds were seen in the trees, jumping from branch to branch, or flying to the very top and singing the most exquisite melodies. Nor was there a lack of water; springs without number bubbled out among the rocks and pebbles, flowed down the hills and formed little rills, which farther down widened out into brooks and still farther down developed into wide streams. There were especially four large streams that flowed through the garden and watered it, so that the grass grew luxuriously and the

bushes and the trees were bedecked with the richest foliage. We do not know exactly where Paradise was located; but since the Bible calls two of the streams that flowed through the garden Euphrates and Tigris (map!), it must have been somewhere in Asia Minor. It does not matter much where it was situated; the main thing is that it existed somewhere, and that it was wondrously beautiful. Rich people, kings and princes have beautiful gardens; but, children, believe me, none of them are so large and beautiful as the garden of joy that God made when He created the world. And think of it, in this beautiful garden of joy, called Paradise, the first man, Adam, was allowed to live. God Himself assigned it to him as his dwelling place. Oh, how happy God thus made man!

Adam could walk through the garden, find his delight in looking at the flowers, eat of the juicy fruits, and lie down in the cool shade of the trees. It was also a pleasure for him to look at the animals. He must have liked them better even than the flowers and the trees; for they were alive and could glance at him with their beaming eyes. They had perfect confidence in him and liked to be in his company. Once God had them all pass by Adam, so that he might look at them all very closely and give each one a suitable name. If we only knew all these names, we would be apt to wonder at Adam's wisdom in finding such fitting names for the various animals. By and by they remembered these names and responded to them. However, though the dog came to him when he called his name, and the lion would come to him and lie down at his feet, so that he could stroke its mane, as we do that of the horse, and though he could call them pet-names and talk to them, there was one thing which the animals could not do, either, and that was, to talk to Adam; apart from the few sounds which they made, they were mute. And yet, man wants some one with whom he can carry on a conversation. That is one reason why it is so hard for him

to be in prison. Sometimes an imprisoned man is made to work very hard, but he does not mind that nearly so much as being locked up in a cell, and unable to converse with others, unable to tell them his thoughts or pour out his heart to them. So Adam began to long for a being of his kind, with whom he might exchange his thoughts and sentiments, and his happiness would have lacked something very essential if God had not satisfied this longing. For his heart was so full of all those beautiful and glorious things which surrounded him, that he could not help wanting to pour it out to some like-minded being. The animals were not intelligent enough to understand just what he thought and felt. The good Lord knew what Adam was longing for, I imagine He had even waited for Adam to develop such a longing, such an ardent wish for some one that would be his equal.

And now let me tell you how He satisfied this longing. He had Adam fall into a profound sleep, took one of Adam's ribs, and out of it made a woman whose name was Eve. No one besides God could have done this. Even the most skillful physician is not able to take a rib from a sleeping man and make a woman of it. But God is more than a skillful doctor, He is the Almighty who can create whatever He pleases. Some day you may hear people make all kinds of remarks about this story; but should it be more difficult to build a woman out of a man's rib than to create the whole world out of nothing? He that could do the one thing could also do the other. When Adam awoke from his sleep, he saw Eve standing before him. The sight of her filled him with wonder, and he exclaimed, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken from Man." It was just such a being that he had desired to have about him. Adam felt at once that this being would understand him. With this woman he could exchange thoughts and sentiments. To her he could pour out his very heart. Yes, with his clear vision he even looked

into the future and saw how man and wife would for all time live together in closest communion; for he said, "A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall be one flesh." God Himself, by giving Adam a woman, instituted marriage here on earth; marriage is therefore something sacred, and one who sins in his marital relations sins against something that has been divinely ordered. Oh, how happy Adam was now! I imagine he walked through the garden with Eve, showing her a pretty spot here, and another one there. Now they were sitting down by the side of the brook, listening to the waters as they murmured in their flow across the pebbles, and then again they stood still to hearken as the birds sang their sweet melodies in the trees overhead. When they were hungry, they picked berries from the bushes and apples and pears from the trees. And time and again they would say to each other, "Surely, God loves us most dearly, having made everything so very beautiful and placed us in this glorious garden. Let us love Him, because He first loved us." Not that they were at leisure all the time; for they also had to work, God having told them to dress and keep the garden. They most likely watered the tiny plants, digging little rills to take the water to them; they picked up the grape-vines and helped them find trees to which they could cling. But their work was not tiresome; it only gave them pleasure, and added to their happiness.

Besides, Adam and Eve were told by God to rule, not only over the garden, but also over the animals in it, both large and small. He said to them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." From Adam and Eve many, many people were to be descended, so that the whole earth might be inhabited by them. And everywhere man was to be lord over all the animals, and make all the wealth and all the forces of nature serve his pur-

poses. This is what the artist has tried to show in our picture; here God points to the animals with the one hand, while His other hand is raised toward Adam and Eve as He says to them, "Over all these you are to have dominion." See, here is the big elephant with its large ears and long trunk; just above it are seated two huge birds. Farther down you can see the proud horse with its high head and its long mane. And close by, what is it that is sticking out its little head? Sure enough, it is a lamb; and the other animal is a hart, an animal that can run very fast and that now always takes to flight when it sees a human being. But what do we see next? Indeed, a lion; it is a very strong animal and for this reason we call it the king of beasts. Beside the lion the gentle cow is comfortably stretched out, and between her legs is seen a coiled snake. Could all these different kinds of animals be kept together like that at the present time? No, since some of them would eat the others up. Such fierce animals we would have to put behind bars. But it used to be different; right after God had made the animals they were not unfriendly toward one another. It was, therefore, an easy matter for Adam and Eve to rule over them; indeed, to have dominion over the animals was part of their happiness. However, not only the animals, but also everything else was placed at their service. The forces that are in the world, such as wind, gas and electricity, were to be subdued and used by them. They were to utilize the treasures that lie inside of the earth, such as coal, iron and other kinds of metal, including the valuable gold and silver. They were to be kings and lords upon the earth; everthing was to belong to them and serve their purposes. There have been many rich kings and powerful rulers upon the earth; but none of them ever equalled Adam and Eve in wealth and power, since there was nothing that did not belong to them, and no living creature that did not have to obey them.

Could God make the first human beings any happier than they were because of all that has been mentioned? Yes, children, He made them still happier. The best and greatest part of their happiness I have not yet spoken of. And what was that? This it was, that the dear God came into the garden and spoke to them as a father does to his beloved children. Oh, how glad they were when He entered the garden, and how they ran to meet Him, just as you children do today when your parents return from a journey. Their eyes sparkled for joy; they had so many things to show Him and so many questions to ask! At the present time we do not see God anymore; but to Adam and Eve He appeared in human form, so that they were able to see Him and clasp His hand. What intimate fellowship God thus had with the first human beings, and they with Him! How God must have explained to them the many things which they could not fully understand! How He must have told them all about the great work of creation, assuring them that it was all to be for their benefit, that they might rule over it and enjoy it to their hearts' content. When He had left them after such a blessed time of fellowship, they must have said to each other time and again, "How dearly God does love us; let us love Him, because He first loved us."

As a loving Father, God did not give Adam and Eve many commandments; they were not constantly to say, "Yes, this God forbade us, and that also, and that likewise." His commandments were not to be like a hedge to them, crowding them in on every side, allowing them no freedom of action. God gave them only a single commandment, and it was to be for their own good. This was the commandment: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; only of this tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." That was indeed an easy commandment. Of all the trees they were permitted to eat, only not of that

particular one. This tree God had placed there, not that they might eat of it, but that they might know what pleases Him and what does not please Him. By means of this tree He wanted to train them, as a father trains his children; it was to be both church and school to them. Now if they will keep His commandment and not eat of the forbidden fruit, they will be doing what is good and pleasing to God; and they will remain in the garden forever and be ever more closely united with God. But if they transgress His commandment and eat of the forbidden tree, they will do what is evil and displeasing to God, and will be put out of the garden, and God will not have anything more to do with them; having been happy children of God, they will become lost and condemned creatures, and will finally have to suffer death. Should we not expect that Adam and Eve would have said to each other, "How could we be so bad and unthankful as to transgress the only commandment which God has given us! For we would thereby grieve God, our Friend and Father, and rob ourselves of all that makes us truly happy. Be this our love toward God, that we keep His commandment, which surely is not hard to keep. If we keep it, our happiness will be without end, and that is just what God wants it to be"!

Children, you do not live in Paradise; but has not God also made you happy? Yes, the best part of the happiness which Adam and Eve enjoyed is yours also: God is your Father, and you are His children. God became your Father when you were baptized. It was then that He adopted you as His children. As real children of God, you may look up to Him and say "Our Father, who art in heaven." And like a kind father He has provided you with everything that you need; He has given you father and mother, meat and drink, clothing and shoes, and you may pray to Him with all cheerfulness and confidence, as beloved children entreat their affectionate parents. He so ordained it that you are now being

instructed, in order that you may learn what is good and what is evil, and that you may do what is good and thus remain His children forever. Yes, our God is a kind God; we must also say to one another, "How God does love us; let us love Him, because He first loved us."

3. How the First Human Pair Sinned.

How happy God made the first human pair! He had Adam live in Paradise, a garden far more beautiful than any that are owned by the wealthiest kings and princes today. There Adam could have everything his heart desired. There God also created Eve for him, that he might have some one with whom he could converse and enjoy himself. Oh, what happiness it must have been for them to walk through the garden hand in hand and point out to each other those spots which were particularly beautiful. I wish I could have been with them on such wanderings through Paradise. Besides, they were rulers over everything in the garden. They ruled over the pretty flowers, picking of them as many as they pleased; over the juicy fruits, of which they could eat as many as they liked; over the birds of the air, that came right up to them and showed no signs of being afraid; over all the animals of the field, even over the strong lion and the big elephant, which willingly obeyed them. Yes, God had made Adam and Eve real kings over the entire earth. They were indeed happy creatures. And yet, as you well know, their greatest happiness consisted of something far different and higher, of the fact that God came into the garden to converse with them, as a father converses with his children. What blessed hours those must have been when they could associate with God as happily and confidingly as you associate with your parents, when they needed to have so little fear of Him that they could look right into His eyes, and take hold of His hand, and walk along beside

Him. Nor did He molest them with a whole lot of commandments, so that they would have had to be afraid at every step that they might transgress them. He only gave them a single commandment, and He did it for their own good. What commandment was that, Frank? Yes, that was it. They were permitted to eat of all the trees, only not of that particular one. It was to be both school and church to them; for it was to teach them what is good and what is evil, in order that they might always do the good and thus continue to be happy-hearted. Indeed, that was God's whole aim and purpose, to see them happy.

What should Adam and Eve, therefore, have done with this commandment, Mary? To be sure, they should have kept it, and gladly, too. If they had kept it, their happiness would never have ended, they would have remained happy for all time. But, sad to say, they did not keep it. We shall hear today how the first human pair transgressed God's commandment, **how the first human pair sinned.**

How may it have happened that the first human beings transgressed God's commandment and sinned against Him, while He was aiming at nothing but their happiness? One would think that they could not have sinned against God, seeing He had arranged everything in such a way as to make them the happiest beings. At first Adam an Eve did keep God's commandment. We can not tell just how long this lasted, but it can not have been too short a time. They had well remembered the commandment and sometimes said to each other, "Of this tree we must not eat, lest we die." I imagine when they saw that particular tree they stood in awe of it. I would not be surprised if they had come to call it the "tree of death", and walked around it at some distance, rather than to come in contact with its forbidden fruit. It is safe to say, too, that they did not only think of what God had forbidden them to do, and of death as the sure punishment for eating of the forbidden fruit; but also were re-

minded of God's great love toward them, and often said to each other, "Since God so loved us that He made us altogether happy, we will also love Him and keep His commandment most perfectly". How, then, did it come to pass that in spite of all this they finally transgressed God's commandment and ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree?

The evil thought did not come out of their own heart. But there was one who could not bear to see them love God and keep His commandments. That was the devil. He is the great enemy and adversary of God, ever intent upon destroying God's work. As often as he saw Adam and Eve, who where so pure and holy, and who lived so entirely in accord with God's will, it angered him, and he thought of all kinds of schemes by which he might be able to destroy this work of God, to rob them of their happiness, and to make them as unclean and unholy and wicked as he himself was. There are boys who, when they are dirty themselves, like nothing better than to make others look unclean also. It is quite the same with the devil. And not only did he want to make Adam and Eve, the first human beings, as unclean and sinful as he was, but he also thought of how God would then no longer have any need for them, how He could not be their Father anymore, but would have to drive them out of Paradise. And that is just what he desired to bring about; for he said to himself, "If I only succeed in getting them away from God, they will belong to me, and will have to obey me as long as they live; I shall forever be their master, and they will be my servants."

No doubt, the devil planned for a long time how he might accomplish his evil aim and purpose. He asked himself the question, "What shall I do to get Adam and Eve forsake the right way, to make them transgress God's commandment, and thus to bring them into my possession forever?" He came to the conclusion that it would be easier for him to accomplish his purpose if he did not try to approach Adam,

but Eve, since woman is weaker than man, and therefore more easily led astray. He also said to himself, "I must not appear to the woman just as I am. I dare not show by anything that I am the enemy of God and man; I must pretend to be man's friend, having only his best interest at heart." At last the plan was spun. The devil knew how he was going to accomplish his wicked purpose.

He was going to employ cunning and prudence. Just to what extent, that the Bible tells us most precisely. In Paradise there were all kinds of serpents, both large and small ones. With their smooth bodies they glided along swiftly on the ground, they coiled themselves in among the bushes, they wound themselves around the trunks of trees, and thus worked their way up into the limbs and branches. Adam and Eve were not afraid of them; for they were not at all dangerous. They had doubtlessly watched them many a time, and noticed how cunning they were, surpassing in slyness all the other beasts of the field. One of these serpents the devil decided to use as his tool; it was to be his mouthpiece; through it he was going to speak to Eve in his attempt to lead her astray, to persuade her to leave the right way and transgress God's commandment.

Eve had most likely, as a rule, gone out of the way of the forbidden tree; but one time when she was passing very near it, she saw a particularly beautiful serpent which had wound itself around the trunk of the tree, and was looking right in her direction. It seemed to Eve as if the serpent's eyes were turned directly toward her and as if it kept them fixed upon her most persistently. So instead of continuing on her way she stood still and also looked over toward the serpent and the tree. And as she stood there looking at the serpent, it suddenly began to speak. This surprised her all the more, because as often as she had seen snakes before, she never yet had heard one speak. She had thought that there was no one who could speak aside from herself, her hus-

band, and God. Do snakes, then, really speak, Mary? You are quite right, they can not speak. How, then, could the snake there in Paradise speak, Louise? Of course, we already know it; the snake was not speaking, but the devil spoke through the snake, using it as his tool. Eve was not to notice who it was that spoke to her; that is why the devil spoke to her through the serpent. And what did he want to do by talking to her through the serpent's mouth? Who remembers? You are right, John; the devil wanted to get her to leave the right way and transgress God's commandment.

And now let me tell you what the devil said to Eve through the serpent. This is the way he began, "Did God really say, 'You shall not eat of all the trees in the garden?" He knew well enough that God expressed Himself altogether differently, that He had allowed Adam and Eve to eat of every tree in the garden with the exception of that particular one; but he probably worded his question like that in order to find out whether Eve still knew God's commandment. He wanted to make God's word doubtful to her, so that she might not be quite certain as to what He really had said. Probably he said to himself, "As soon as her mind is unsettled with regard to the kind of commandment that God issued, it will be just so much easier for me to get her to act contrarily to God's will and thereby gravely sin against Him." We are already beginning to notice how subtilly he had planned everything. But in the start his subtilty did not help him out much. Eve still knew God's commandment quite accurately, and she did not allow the devil to unsettle her mind in the least. She replied, "We do indeed eat of all the trees in the garden; but as for the tree in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" She meant to say, "How you pervert things! Just the opposite of what you said is true! God did not say to us, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the gar-

den.' He could not have been so cruel as to put us in this garden, with its many beautiful fruit-trees, and then say to us, 'But you must not eat of the fruit of any of these trees.' He is too kind and good for that. He said expressly that we might eat of the fruit of all the trees, only not of this one, to which you are clinging. God no doubt has His reasons for making this one exception. Whoever touches this tree and eats of its fruit, must die. But that is just what God wishes to prevent; He does not want us to die, but to live forever in this beautiful garden. So God meant it only for our good when He forbade us to eat of this tree. You are generally so very subtil, surpassing all other animals in this respect; but in the present instance your talk is really very foolish."

This was what Eve said to the serpent and to the devil, who was using the serpent as his tool. The devil had lost his case, and he might have withdrawn, seeing that with all his subtilty he had not been able to delude Eve, that she not only still knew God's commandment quite accurately, but was also aware of the fact that God meant it to be for their own good. However, that is not the way the devil behaves. He does not surrender that quickly. If he does not succeed in one way, he at once tries another. So in this case, too, he soon regained his composure and struck out on a new path to reach his goal, and prevail upon Eve to transgress the commandment of God. "Hold on", said he to himself, "Eve imagines that God was prompted by His love to give them that commandment, having meant it to be for their own good. I must get her to give up this belief, and make her believe instead that God gave them this commandment out of envy and not out of love, not because He had their happiness in mind, but because He was not generous enough to let them enjoy the very best. Therefore he quickly said to the woman, "You most surely shall not die if you eat of the fruits of this tree; God lied to you when He told you so. He knows only

too well that in the day you eat thereof your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. God is only envious and does not want you to be like Him; that is why He gave you the commandment. Not out of love, but out of envy, He forbade your eating of this tree." All this was, of course, a great, big lie, and the devil knew it, too; but that did not trouble him, if he could only reach his goal, if he could only get the woman to believe him and eat of the forbidden fruit.

Did the woman notice the lie? She should have noticed it; for she knew God, had been in His communion long enough, and seen enough evidences of His holiness and truthfulness, as well as of His sincere love toward her and her husband. She, therefore, ought to have said to the devil, "Depart from me; I do not want to hear you, for you are lying. God is not as you represent Him. Would He have placed me and Adam in this beautiful Paradise and made us so happy here if He were envious of us and did not mean to look out for our welfare?" By answering the devil in this way, she would have silenced him the second time and remained God's beloved child. She probably did have similar thoughts; but thoughts of an entirely different kind also awoke in her heart. The serpent had spoken one word that Eve could not forget; it was the word, "You shall be like God." Oh, to be like God, to know as He does what is good and what is evil, that she thought would be something great. And the more she dwelt on this thought, the smaller the happiness seemed to her which she already possessed there in Paradise. It was with her as it sometimes is with you children: bread and butter taste very good to you until you see a sweet cake standing right within your reach; then you suddenly become dissatisfied with your buttered bread and want some of the cake. Or, you are perfectly contented to be in the house with your mother, until you see children of your own age running about outside; now the room all at once becomes too small for you,

and you begin to think, "We shall not be truly happy before we are allowed also to go out of doors and run about in the open air." Something like this happened to Eve. Paradise all at once was not good enough for her anymore; she aspired to be like God, to know as He does, what is good and what is evil. She forgot entirely how happy she had been up to this time; she also forgot to ask whether Satan was really telling her the truth, or merely lied to her as before; she lost sight of the evident truth that God is not envious and that He can not tell a lie. She thought of only one thing, and heard only the one enticing word, "You shall be like God." Her whole heart was suddenly filled with the desire for this boon. This was, however, an evil desire; the devil, and not God, had put it into her heart. But she was not concerned about good and evil now, the one and only thing she longed for was, to be like God. And then, children, Eve lifted up her eyes and looked at the fruit of the forbidden tree. If she only had not looked at it, she might perhaps have bridled her evil desire and made up her mind to abide by what was right. But she raised her eyes and looked at the fruit from all sides; and because it looked so good and sweet, thus giving promise of being most palatable, and because she believed the devil's promise that she would be like God if she ate of the forbidden fruit, she finally stretched out her hand, reached up into the tree, plucked the forbidden fruit, and ate of it; then she gave her husband some of it, and he also ate. O children, at this the angels in heaven must have wept, and it also cut into the heart of God Himself; for now the first human beings had believed the devil rather than God, the commandment of God had been transgressed and the first sin had been committed, whereby death and all its attending ills had entered into the world. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

The devil was indeed to be blamed because he seduced and misled man; but man was also to be blamed for putting more faith in the devil than in God. If Adam and Eve had resisted the devil, he would have had to flee from them; but they listened to him and did as he bade them. Therefore, children, be not deceived! Evil communications corrupt good manners! Resist the devil, and he will flee from you! And again, children, if sinners entice you, consent not to their alluring words!—There are many sad days, but the saddest one of all, a day black as midnight, was and is the one on which the first human pair sinned.

4. How Adam and Eve Through Sin Became Lost and Condemned Creatures.

"Your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be like God, knowing good and evil", this was the boon which Satan pictured to Eve in the most fascinating colors, that he might persuade her to transgress God's commandment. This boon was to come to Adam and Eve if they ate of the forbidden fruit. By their own experience they were to gain such a deep knowledge of what is good and what is evil as only the holy and all-knowing God possesses. Satan had thus promised to Adam and Eve something very great; but would he keep his promise? Were the first human beings, who obeyed him, going to receive of him the boon that he pictured to them in such alluring colors? Had he spoken the truth, or had he played the role of a liar and deceiver? I am afraid that Adam and Eve, who followed his bidding, were much in the same position as many travelers whose way led them through a great desert. These people knew that if they stayed on the right way they would reach their goal, and that rest, joy and comfort would then be their portion. But they saw, in the direction away from their course, a wonderfully fascinating sight. It seemed to them that they beheld,

at a limited distance, a scene consisting of glistening waters, shady palm-trees and most delicious fruit. Swerving from the right way to their destination, they pursued the beautiful image upon which their enchanted eyes were steadily fixed. But the farther they walked in pursuit of the beautiful image, the farther it receded. At last they grew faint, fell over in the desert, and miserably perished in the hot sand. It was only the sand which glistened at a distance and conjured up the fascinating scene. It was not truth, but illusion and deception. Those travelers came to their death by chasing after the illusory image that beckoned them. What, if Adam and Eve had met a similar fate when they listened to Satan's voice, departed from the way of obedience to God, and pursued the boon which Satan held up before their eyes? We shall learn today **what became of Adam and Eve because they listened to Satan and committed sin.**

In the Bible we read that when Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, "their eyes were opened". That sounds as if they obtained the great boon which Satan had placed before their eyes. The devil had said to them, "In the day you eat thereof your eyes shall be opened", and now, after they have eaten, the Bible itself, which is the truth, tells us that "their eyes were opened". Yes, but the sad thing is that the Bible now continues with its narrative in quite a different strain. It relates that "their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked". So their eyes were indeed opened, but not in such a way that they knew the evil as God does; for He knows how terrible it is and therefore keeps it at a distance and does not allow it to approach Him at all. Adam and Eve, however, knew it in such a way as to be aware of the fact that they themselves had done the evil and thus become evil in their innermost nature. They had been naked before, but since they were pure and without sin, they did not mind it any more than real small children. Now, however, when they had

transgressed God's commandment and their hearts had thereby become sinful, they were no longer chaste and pure in thought either and therefore felt ashamed as they looked at each other. Everything in them had come to be so entirely different. It was as if they had been transformed. Deep down in their hearts their attitude toward God had undergone a change, and so all that comes out of the heart, that looks out of the eyes, that issues from the lips, and that moves the different members of the body and determines their actions, had also undergone a change and was altogether different than it had been before. That Adam and Eve felt ashamed, was, in a certain respect, rather a hopeful sign. For one who commits sin and does not even blush is indeed a rogue. As long as one feels ashamed of his sin, there is hope that he may experience a change for the better. Nevertheless, children, that Adam and Eve **had** to feel ashamed in the presence of each other, was a great calamity. As long as you have a clear conscience, you need not feel ashamed in the presence of anyone, but may look everybody straight in the face. But when you have done something wrong, when, for instance, you have told a lie, then, of course, you must feel ashamed. Are you happy at such times, when you stand there with downcast eyes, and your face all flushed? Certainly not! We see, then, that Adam and Eve were not made happier by committing sin; that, on the contrary, their sin was a misfortune to them and meant the loss of their former happiness. Since they were ashamed in the presence of each other, they took large leaves from a fig-tree, joined them together for aprons, and tied these around their bodies. In a way, they wanted to cover their sinfulness, just as people today make the attempt to cover their sins by offering all sorts of excuses. In this attempt they may succeed so far as other people are concerned; but what of themselves? The human conscience within is not so easily deceived; it continues to pound like a hammer and keeps on telling

you, "You did it after all, and it was wrong of you to do it." And then, children, even if that little hammer within should really cease hammering, in whose sight would our sin still remain sin? Most assuredly, in the sight of God. Before Him we can not cover up our sins with all the excuses that we might offer. This at once became apparent in the case of Adam and Eve.

The day upon which they had eaten of the forbidden fruit was drawing toward its close. Ever since they had committed the evil deed they had not experienced one happy moment. And the approach of evening was even to make bad matters worse. For in the evening, when the air began to grow cool, God sometimes came into the garden and talked to them. Formerly, this had brought them the greatest happiness. But what if He should come today, when they had been so unthankful toward Him and acted contrarily to His commandment? He would have to punish them because of their sin; for He said, "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." And while they were still talking to themselves in this strain, they already heard the familiar rustling of His footsteps, as He majestically passed through the garden. What were they to do now? At other times they ran to meet Him and were glad to have Him appear in their presence; but today, when they had sinned against Him, they did not have the courage to do anything of the kind. For they felt that they would not be able to look into His face. The hammer of their conscience suddenly began beating with such force, and the inner voice plainly said to them, "You are sinners; but sinners and the holy God do not belong together; God is coming to punish you as you have deserved". So they did not go to meet God, they were afraid of Him and ran away from Him, into the dense forest; back of one of the largest trees they hid themselves and out of fear huddled together on the low ground, so that God might not see them. Tell me, were Adam and

Eve happy when they, urged on by their guilty conscience, ran away from God and tried to hide themselves? I rather think they were extremely unhappy. Indeed, the frightened look of their eyes and the huddled position of their bodies showed how unhappy they were. The sense of shame and fear was in their hearts, and changed them from happy to unhappy and pityful creatures. Do you begin to see that Satan had deceived them, that he is a liar and does not keep his word? And how foolish sin had made Adam and Eve! Or is it not the greatest folly to imagine that one can hide away from God? God is omniscient and omnipresent; that is, He knows all things and is present everywhere, so that it is impossible for anyone to hide from Him. In His sight everything is as clear as the sun and clearer. Of Him it is said in the Bible: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." One can not escape from God; for as the air surrounds us as long as we live and breathe, so God surrounds us from all sides, in every place and at every moment. He is also present with us when we commit sin; unseen He stands beside us and watches what we do, and if we try to escape to some other place, He is there before we have reached it and awaits us. Men have escaped from Europe to America and from here to Australia, because they had led a criminal life; but from the presence of God they could not escape in this way. Nor could Adam and Eve escape from Him, as they had attempted; for hardly had they run into the forest and huddled on the ground back of a large tree, when God called after them, "Adam, where art Thou?" and in the same moment He stood right behind them.

It was the Father seeking His children, not because He did not know where they were, but in order to make them come to themselves, much as your mother or your teacher calls you by name, in order that you may come to yourselves, look up and think of your duty. It was still the same voice, the one that Adam had often heard; it was to encourage him to come out openly, to fall down before God and ask Him to forgive him his sin. Adam did come out of his hiding-place, but he did not fall down before God and ask to be forgiven. He remained standing, perhaps at some distance, with his eyes directed to the ground or into the distance, so as to avoid meeting the eyes of God; and this is what he said: "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." But was Adam telling the truth? He had indeed heard the rustling of God's footsteps, and he had also hidden himself; but was he afraid and did he hide himself because he was naked? Did he not rather feel afraid and run to hide because he had transgressed God's commandment and eaten of the forbidden fruit? But if this was the case, O children, then Adam had lied, and lied to God. Yes, that was the first lie that came from the lips of man. Before that, only the devil had lied, but now man had lied also. Thereby he had become unlike God and similar to the devil; for God is the truth and can not lie, whereas the devil lies and does not like to do anything so well as to tell lies. Was I not right, therefore, in saying that sin made everything different in the life of the first human beings? The order of things was indeed changed around. Before they were glad when God came and ran to meet Him, now they are afraid of Him and try to hide from His presence; before they loved the truth and did not know what a lie is, now they love the lie and boldly tell it before God, supposing that He will not detect it! Presently we shall have occasion to note some more changes.

For God would not allow Himself to be deceived by Adam. He knew well enough why Adam and Eve had hidden from Him. So He held Adam's sin up to him and said, "Who told thee that thou art naked? Hast thou not eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee not to eat?" And now listen to the bold, shameless reply that Adam made to God. He said to Him, "Yes, it is true, I ate of the forbidden fruit; but that was not my fault. The woman is to blame; for she gave me of the fruit, and I ate. If Thou hadst not given me the woman, I would not have transgressed Thy commandment. If Thou wilt punish anyone, then thou must punish this woman." Do you not notice, children, how coward Adam was? He is the one who has committed the sin, but somebody else is to bear the blame. He wants to free himself by casting the burden of his guilt upon the shoulders of another person. Let some one else suffer the punishment, if he only can escape it. And what lack of regard he shows for his wife! If I love a person, I show regard for him, take his part, suffer myself rather than see suffering inflicted upon him. Adam, however, heartlessly gives up his wife to the judgment of God. "Here she is, punish **her,** if you must punish anyone, not me," such are his sentiments. Yes, he so far forgets himself as to accuse God Himself and blame Him; for he says, "The woman **whom thou gavest to be with me,** she gave me of the tree." It is as if he meant to say, "Hadst Thou not given me such a woman, I would not have transgressed Thy commandment." O the ungrateful and shamelessly bold man! He has forgotten how he longed for a wife; he has forgotten how happy he was when God gave her to him; he dares to put the blame of his sin and guilt on the holy God, who is farther removed from sin than the West from the East, than heaven from earth. How sin has changed Adam! A similar change had come over Eve. For when God asked her, "Why didst thou do this, why didst thou take of the forbidden fruit and also give thy

husband of it?" she answered, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate." She acknowledges that she was beguiled, but she also does not confess that she allowed herself to be beguiled and deceived, that it was she who sinned, that she should have been more resistant and believed God rather than the devil. She likewise does not ask to be granted forgiveness, but attempts to put the blame on others. Thus we see that both out of Adam and out of Eve the truth and life that come from God had departed and the lie and death which come from the devil had entered in. God had said, "In the day that you eat of the fruit you shall die", and death did actually enter their hearts like a destructive poison and killed therein all that was of God, and all that now came out of their hearts was infected by the death germ. The Scriptures tell us that if we let sin reign in our bodies and obey its demands, as the servant does those of his master, we are dead in the sight of God, as dead as the tree that has dried up and is no longer able to bear palatable fruit.

At last God addressed the serpent, talking to it as if it were a rational creature; for He knew that the devil was back of it, and to him He directed His message. Here, however, God did not stop to ask, "Why didst thou do this?" He knew that the devil was His worst enemy, who had enticed man to commit sin, in order that God might not have His kingdom among men, but that he, the devil, might rule over them. God knew full well how glad the devil was that he had succeeded in effecting the fall of man. So He at once acted as Judge and pronounced judgment. Upon the serpent He pronounced judgment in these words: "Because thou hast done this, thou shalt be cursed above all the animals of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." Just look at a snake, and you will notice that God's judgment came true. It should be said that on account of man's sin a great change has come over all animals; but in the case of the serpent the curse is most noticeable.

In whom does it not excite fear and terror suddenly to meet such a serpent, with its sneaking yet rapid movements, with its hissing tones, with its poisonous tooth, with its fiery eyes, and with its black tongue, the movements of which resemble those of a flickering flame? People dread meeting even the little serpents that are found in our own country. But truly dreadful is the sight of the giant boa constrictor, which often reaches the length of twenty feet, moves along like the rushing of a stormwind, pounces upon large animals, winds its monster body around it and crushes it to death, sprays its froth all over it and swallows it with hair and skin. When this serpent makes its appearance, all the animals become terror-stricken. Up to this day the serpent is distinguished from other vertebrates by not having any legs upon which to move about, but crawling along on its belly, wriggling its way from place to place. It also continues still the habit of eating dust. When it has caught an animal for food, it crushes the animal and throws it into the dust, covers it with saliva that flows from its mouth and then devours it together with the dust. All this is to be looked upon as the result of the curse which God pronounced upon the serpent because it served the devil as a tool when he enticed man to commit sin. It is God's punishment.

Now let us also hear the judgment that God pronounced upon the devil, who was back of the serpent. It was this: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The devil had thought, "If I succeed in enticing Adam and Eve to sin, they will forever belong to me; they will no longer be God's property, but mine; I will be their lord, and they with all their descendants, will have to serve me, me alone." And when he had actually caused them to fall into sin, he laughed by himself and thought, "Ah, now I have accomplished my desire; now they shall forever remain in my power." But just that was not

to be; just therein was the devil's punishment to consist that there was to be no friendship, but enmity between Eve and the devil. Eve and her offspring were not to bow to the will of the devil and acknowledge him as their lord; no, they were to war against him, to resist his rule over them, and at last there was even to spring from the descendants of Eve One to bruise the head of the serpent, that is, to take all power over men away from the devil, to free them from his evil dominion and lead them back to God. That sounded altogether different from what the devil had pictured to himself. Although he had gained the rule over man, he was not to retain it.

Not until now, after the originator of sin, the father of lies, the devil, had received his punishment, were Adam and Eve to hear of theirs. For they, too, had sinned, and their sin demanded punishment. They were verily guilty in the sight of God, because He had given them sufficient strength to resist the devil, and they had not made use of it; they consented to the will of Satan and followed his bidding. Eve did so first, and therefore she was also first to hear the sentence of God. He said to her, "I will cause thee much pain in thy life, and thy will shall be subjected to that of thy husband, and he shall be thy lord, to rule over thee." And these words came true. Women have to endure much more pain and sickness than men; the delicate body of a woman is much more easily injured than the more solid and rough body that man possesses. The other thing that God had foretold likewise came to pass. Eve had induced Adam to sin and thus made her will effective; now, by way of punishment, her will is to be dominated by her husband's, and he is to be her lord. That such is up to the present time the order of things, is seen most plainly among heathen nations. There the most menial and trying work is imposed upon the women. As a rule, they are not allowed to eat at the same table with men, but must wait on them while they eat. Although this

has become different among Christian people, still the man is the one who has the last word, and not the woman.

However, man was not to go unpunished either. Therefore God said to him, as the last in order, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife and eaten of the forbidden tree, cursed be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground; for dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return." That was indeed a most severe punishment. It consisted of two things. First, Adam was to lead a life of work and toil; second, he was to die and be buried in the earth. Before man had committet sin, he had already worked; but working was his joy and delight, because there were no weeds, no thorns, and no thistles, and whatever man undertook, in that he also succeeded. That was to be different now. On account of man's sin, God cursed the earth, which was man's dwelling-place. Thorns and thistles grew out of the ground, and noxious weeds made their appearance; and that made work a burden. The ground at times got to be so hard now, that man could only work it in the sweat of his brow. Then again there was such intense heat that everything became scorched, or such continuous rain that everything was drowned. It might happen that man imagined his harvest to be quite beyond the danger line, and all at once, perhaps over night, it would be totally destroyed. But it hurts when thus all of one's work and toil proves to have been in vain. As long as one is young and alert like you, he does not take much notice of these things. But as you grow older you will find it out by your own experience. One failure follows the other, and some of our most cherished plans are not realized. That is not only true of the farmer's work, but also of the work which any other calling may demand; much fruitless work is done in

the factory, in the workshop, in school, in church. At times God gives us success in our endeavors, so that we may take courage after repeated failures, and not grow entirely despondent. But why do your parents, or your grandparents, often have such furrowed brows, and why are their faces so badly wrinkled? Ah, these furrows and wrinkles are caused by the many cares of life, by so much work and toil that proved to be in vain. All this came into the world through sin. That is why Luther calls this world a vale of sorrow. Man having been changed by sin, all his surroundings also were changed, and man's whole life is much more severe than it had been before the fall. And after a life of work and disappointment, of care and worry, the worst was yet to come, death! The soul was to leave the body, the latter returning to the earth, and becoming as the dust from which it was taken, and of which it solely consisted before God had breathed into it the breath of life. The body's strength was to vanish, its breath was to cease, the eyes were to break, and the whole body, with all its parts, was to become food for worms. You know that all this has actually happened. Some of you have seen people who were dead; all of you have had occasion to watch a funeral procession pass through the streets; and you know where the cemetery is with its many graves, in which people have buried their dead. Created to live with God forever, and to be perfectly happy, man now is subject to death and decay.

After God had thus imposed the deserved punishment of death upon man, He also drove him out of Paradise and placed a cherub, that is, an angel before the gate, with a flaming sword, so that it was impossible for man to return to his former dwelling-place. In our picture the artist has tried to present this scene. Here we see Adam and Eve as they are being driven out of Paradise. Look at them more closely! They are not happy, which is indicated by the fact that their eyes, instead of being directed up toward heaven,

are cast down toward the earth. They are sad and feel ashamed, as you do even now when you have done something wrong and have to suffer punishment. And who is it that stands back of them? Yes, there the artist has put an angel, who, however, does not look friendly, as the angels of God are generally pictured; one can tell by his looks that he has nothing agreeable to say to Adam and Eve, but that he speaks to them words of wrath and terror. His severe mission is also indicated by the sword which he holds in his hand; for it is not only sharp, but also flashes like the lightning that comes down from the sky and strikes terror to the hearts of old and young alike. With the other hand he orders Adam and Eve to depart from Paradise; the gesture as much as says to Adam and Eve, "Be gone! In Paradise there is no longer a place for you." And they understand the angel; they leave the garden and do not even take courage to look back once more, before it vanishes out of their sight. Adam has his face covered with his hands and is so sad that he can not keep back the tears. His boldness is all gone; he realizes only the one thing, how unhappy he has become through his own fault.

Do Adam and Eve look as if by eating of the forbidden fruit they had come to be like God? Oh, they know it only too well that the devil has deceived them, that they have not become like God, but have lost Him, that He is no longer their Father, but their Judge, that they are no longer His happy and joyfull children, but lost and condemned creatures. They do not know the way that leads back to God; Paradise, where God was wont to commune with them, is closed. They are now standing in the midst of a region covered with thorns and thistles, where work and toil, sickness and pain are in store for them. All this misery is already the beginning of death; for the life that proceeds from God is no longer in evidence. From the very moment that a person becomes infected with the pest, he begins to die; and in like

manner, when our life has once become poisoned by sin, death already holds us in his grasp, sin and death being inseparably linked together. At last the grave opens to receive its victim, and Satan is already waiting to see whether he can not forever gain possession of the soul. But that is what it means to be lost and condemned: no longer to have fellowship with God, to lead a life filled with toil and misery, and to have nothing to look forward to but death and hell. O children, how terrible and serious a thing is sin, if on its account one is lost and condemned! Surely, you need to fear nothing more than sin, and must never yield to it. Otherwise you will grow entirely different within, and everything about you will also undergo a change for the worse; God Himself will not be toward you as He was before, having changed from your loving Father to your stern Judge, bidding you depart from His presence. That, however, is the greatest misfortune that can befall anyone.

Was there, then, no hope whatever left for Adam and Eve? Not by rights, anymore than there was hope for those who as travelers in the desert swerved from the right way and pursued the deceitful image that beckoned them from another direction. You will remember how they perished in the hot sand. But it is different with God; He indeed punishes the sinner most severely and banishes him from His presence, because He is just and holy; however, ours is also a merciful God, who delights in saving the sinner. What was it that He said to the devil? Was it not this: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, and it shall bruise thy head?" And did God not thereby say that the time would come when the devil would lose his power over man, and man, now a lost and condemned creature, would again be free and happy? Yes, that is what God said; it was the first promise that He gave to fallen man. The next time we shall hear how He kept His promise and once more made lost and condemned man free and happy.

5. How the Savior Was Born.

When the gates of Paradise were closed to Adam and Eve, and an angel with a flaming sword was placed before the door to that beautiful garden, so that they could not return to it, they were indeed lost and condemned creatures. They had lost God and Paradise, and the earth which now became their dwelling-place brought forth thorns and thistles. They were to endure much pain and sickness, and at last death was to come upon them and open to them the door to eternal condemnation. To be in the world without God and to have Satan for a master, means to be lost and condemned. How often Adam and Eve thought of Paradise and of the happy time which they spent there! But it did them no good; their longing and weeping did not take them back to their former home. The greatness of their misfortune and misery may be somewhat understood by us when we think of the heathen who at the present time live without God, lead a most miserable existence, do the evil works to which the devil incites them, and at last die without hope, as lost and condemned creatures. Were Adam and Eve, with all their descendants, forever to remain in such an unhappy state of existence? Was there to be no hope of rescue for them? Had not God said to the serpent and thus to the devil that some day one of the woman's descendants would bruise his head, that is, take away his power from him, and once more make man free? Yes, that is what God had said, and it was the first promise that referred to the coming of the Savior. This promise Adam and Eve took with them as they left Paradise. It accompanied them into the life of change, sickness and death to which they had been doomed. This promise was as a bright star which shed its light into the night of their misery, and to which they could hopefully look up when life grew all too strenuous and gloomy. But did God fulfill His promise? Not immediately, and He had His good reason

for waiting a while. However, He did not forget His promise for a single moment. When finally His time and hour had come, He sent the Savior into the world, that He might redeem all men from the power of the devil and lead them back to God. Once upon a time, in that holy and peaceful night, the very first Christmas night, the Savior was born. You have sung of this night many a time. How does that old Christmas carol go? "Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight! Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Hallelujah, Christ, the Savior is born." Yes, children, Christ, the Savior of all men, has come into the world. In the first Christmas night He was born. Let us hear today **how the Savior was born.** You have often heard this story, and even last night we heard of it again; however, it is a story of which we do not grow tired. There is none more beautiful; for it is the story of God's great love, a love so great that for our sake it took God's only Son out of heaven, and put Him into this lowly world, yes, laid Him into a poor manger.

That the Savior was to be born some day, every devout Israelite knew. For after putting Adam and Eve out of Paradise, God had often repeated the promise in which the birth of the Savior was foretold. He had told it to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; to Moses and King David, and to many, many prophets. This oft-repeated promise of a Savior found its way into the Bible, which was written by the holy men of God. So when on Saturdays the Jews came together in their synagogues just as we do in church, they heard these promises over and over again, as they were read to them. At one time it would be the promise which spoke of the Seed of the woman as bruising the head of the serpent; at another time the words were read, "In thee and thy Seed all nations shall be blessed"; at a third time were quoted the words from Isaiah, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given Prince of Peace"; at a fourth time, the passage from Micah

which spoke of Bethlehem as the place of the Savior's birth. However, that the Savior was to be born now, most of the Israelites did not and could not know, because God had not revealed it to them. But Zacharias and Elizabeth there in the city of Hebron knew it; for, as you will remember from last year's lesson, God had made it known to them through the angel Gabriel, who told them that their own son, John, would go before the Savior and prepare His way for Him. Joseph and Mary also knew it, because God had made it known to them through the same angel. Without doubt, Zacharias and Elizabeth often gave themselves the pleasure of looking forward to the Savior's birth; for they were aware of the salvation which it meant for Israel and for all other people. Joseph and Mary also looked forward to the Savior's birth with happy anticipations, especially Mary, since she herself was to be the Savior's mother.

Joseph belonged to the old royal house of David, but in his family nothing more was to be noticed of that royal glory and splendor. It had been reduced to poverty, and Joseph himself was a carpenter. It seems that in the region about Bethlehem (map!), where King David was born, Joseph still owned a piece of land with a house upon it; but it is not likely that he was the sole owner of it. So he looked for work elsewhere, in order to make a living at his trade. Thus it happened that he came into the northern part of the Jewish land, taking up his abode at Nazareth, a small village in Galilee (map!), and working there as a carpenter, to earn his daily bread It was in Nazareth that he learned to know Mary, became attached to her and asked her to become his wife. Thus they were engaged to be married, as bridegroom and bride. Joseph now felt quite at home in Nazareth, and he probably decided to spend his whole life there. This quite suited Mary; for one does not like to leave the place where he was born and bred.

Before Joseph and Mary had become man and wife and begun to live together under the same roof, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and said to her, "God will cause thee to become the mother of the Savior." That sounded strange to Mary and Joseph; they could not understand how it would happen. But they finally thought, "God is almighty, He will know how to bring it to pass," and they were both very happy. Joseph now took Mary into his home as his wife, and she was all the more to him because she was to become the mother of the Savior. To think that she was to be the mother of Him whom the world had expected from the time of Paradise, and of whose coming the whole Old Testament had spoken! And although Joseph was not to be the real but only the foster-father of the Savior, since the Savior was God's Son and was not to have an earthly father as other children have, there was joy enough in this privilege, even that of being the husband of the woman who was to become the Savior's mother. It was something on account of which all the other men in Nazareth would have envied him, had they known about it. However, no one in Nazareth knew of this secret, except Joseph and Mary, and they kept it to themselves. Those were happy and blessed months which Joseph and Mary spent together at their new home in Nazareth. No doubt, Mary got everything in readiness for the Savior's birth; for even if she was poor, she was going to do all she could by way of preparing for the arrival of the infant Savior.

Suddenly an event occurred which greatly disturbed the quiet happiness of these two people in Nazareth. The Roman Caesar Augustus, to whose empire Nazareth and the whole Jewish land also belonged at that time, had given a command to the effect that in his whole empire a census should be taken. Everyone was to make a statement as to his name, his place of residence, and the value of his property, so that the Caesar might know how much each one would have to pay in taxes. It was to be something like what the assessor

does when he makes the rounds at our homes. Such a census could not be taken in a whole year's time, the Roman empire extending over so many different lands. And yet, it had to happen that in the Holy Land this census was ordered to be taken just in those months during which Joseph and Mary, in their quiet happiness at Nazareth, were looking forward to the birth of the Savior. God had so ordained it; for in this way He wanted to cause Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem, in order that the Savior might be born there, according to the words, which He 800 years before had spoken through the prophet Micah, "Bethlehem Ephratha, out of thee shall One come forth that is to be ruler in Israel." Joseph and Mary, for their part did not think of all this; they only looked upon that census as a great disturbance, crossing all their cherished plans. What were they to do? On account of the census Joseph had to go to Bethlehem (map!); for there he, with other descendants of King David, had his property, and it was there that he had to be enrolled and give an account of all that he possessed. Should he, then, let Mary stay alone in Nazareth at a time when she looked forward to the birth of a child? Instead of that, they quickly decided to give up their home in Nazareth altogether and go to Bethlehem, in order to dispose of the matter concerning the big census and then to stay there.

For Mary this was a most troublesome journey, since at that time there were no railroads and Joseph had no wagon of his own which he could have used as a means of conveyance. So they had nothing left to them but to make the journey on foot, unless we are allowed to assume that Joseph had with him a donkey to carry their baggage, and that Mary also found room on the back of this animal. Even when one chooses the nearest way from Nazareth to Bethlehem (via Shechem, Bethel and Jerusalem), it takes a strong man, who walks continuously, 33 hours to travel that distance, so that it may have taken Joseph and Mary

at least seven days. How hard it must have been for Mary to be on the way so long! But the two travelers finally saw Bethlehem at a distance. How glad they were then! At last they arrived in the little village itself. No one in all the cities and villages through which they passed had any idea that the mother of the future Savior was among them, or they might have asked her into their houses and made it comfortable for her, if, indeed, she did not appear too humble to them to become the Savior's mother. It was the same in Bethlehem, no one had the slightest idea that humble and unknown Mary was the woman whom God had chosen to become the mother of the Savior. People always imagine that anything great can only come from the great, and not from the small and humble. And when Joseph came to the place of which he was part-owner, he and Mary were not only unexpected guests, but the people also had no room in the house for them. The only place not occupied was the stable, which people in Bethlehem liked to have right in connection with the house, and which even today is used as a workshop, or for similar purposes, during those months in which the cattle and sheep remain out in the open field both day and night. So you must not think of a stable like ours. It was a neat and clean place, but only very poor people would have been satisfied to sleep there. Joseph and Mary were not ashamed to be numbered with the poor, so they made the stable their lodging place, and Mary rather liked these humble quarters where it was quiet and where she could remain undisturbed.

And now, children, while Joseph and Mary were lodging in the stable, perhaps in the very first night, Mary became the mother of the Savior; for in the night she gave birth to the Child of which the angel had spoken to her and to Joseph, the Child Jesus, destined to rescue all men and make them the children of God. And there was no one to wait on her; she herself wrapped the Child in swaddling

clothes, and when she looked about for a place to lay the Child, she found nothing in the empty space except a manger, out of which domestic animals had formerly eaten, and in which there probably was a little hay or straw left. Such were the poor circumstances of the Savior's birth! When a son was born to the French emperor Napoleon, a golden cradle stood there to receive the child. At the time of your birth also the most careful preparations had been made, so that you could be laid on soft pillows and be wrapped in warm cloths as soon as you were born. But the Son of God, who came from all the glory of heaven, was laid in a manger, upon a bed of hay and straw. Could He have become weaker than a little child, and poorer than He was there in the manger? Well may we sing: "He leaves the Father's golden throne, is born an infant small, lies in a manger poor and lone, is sheltered in a stall. His pow'r divine He lays aside, takes on the form of man, seeks naught of earthly fame and pride, though all the world He span." How great must be God's love toward us poor lost and condemned creatures, seeing He had His only Son enter into such poverty and loneliness for our sake! "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God!"

But is it true that this little child in the manger is the son of God, the Savior of all men, promised to the world even in Paradise? Was Mary not mistaken? Who knows whether Mary herself was not prompted to ask such questions? The angel Gabriel had said of the Child that He would be great and that He would be called the Son of God and that He would sit on the throne of His father David, and here Mary sees Him born under the most humble circumstances, so that her own heart is moved with feelings of pity. Mary, allow no doubts to creep into thy heart, take no offense

at the poverty of thy Child; with all His lowliness He is still the Savior of all the world, the Son of the Most High, the Son of God. For God Himself sent His angel that he might tell us this and that we might be altogether sure of it.

While there in the stable the first Son of Mary was born, the shepherd's of Bethlehem were out in the field with their herds. A number of them were grouped together, some old and others still young in years. They were taking care of all the sheep of Bethlehem, and had probably come to sit together in a group, to shorten the long hours of the night by relating stories. These were not all of the cheerful kind, because hard times had come upon the Jewish people. They for some time had not been permitted to govern themselves, but were a part of the great Roman empire. The Caesar of Rom was their chief ruler; him they had to serve and obey. That was the sorrow of every devout Jew; for they were to be God's people, and here a heathen emperor held them in subjection. The census which was just then under way, and which Caesar Augustus had ordered, made them feel anew how little they had to say about their own political affairs, how they were obliged to render obedience to the Roman Caesar and send their good money to Rome. I imagine they also talked of this, and I would not be surprised if one of the older shepherds had said to the others, "Oh, let us not complain; it is true, the times are grievous, but we know that the Savior is promised to us. When He comes, then the heathen Romans will have to leave the Holy Land; He will establish a great kingdom, in which we shall have forgiveness of sin and peace without end." "You are right", the others may have answered, "if only the Savior would come soon!"

And while they were thus sitting and talking to each other, all of a sudden something very wonderful happened. Instantly the dark night was illuminated; it became as light as day, and lighter even, where the shepherds were seated.

The shepherds all sprang up and looked in the direction from which this wonderful glory came. See, here in our picture the youngest of the shepherds is leaning to the front, and can not withdraw his eyes from the bright splendor. The other shepherd is holding his hand before his eyes, in order that he may be the better able to look steadily into the light ahead of him. The third one, probably the oldest, has his whole face turned to the light, and is lost in astonishment Even the dog has risen to his feet and does not know how to account for this brightness. But while the shepherds were so intently looking in the same direction, they saw, in the midst of all this bright splendor, the form of an angel. Large and beautiful he stood before them, his hands held up toward heaven. His garments glistened like silver and gold; his whole form was flooded with light, and a heavenly glory radiated from him. Oh, how the shepherds were frightened! They were brave, courageous men; for people could not use cowards as shepherds. But when the angel, right in the midst of the night, suddenly stood before them in all his heavenly glory, they were indeed "sore afraid". However, all at once they heard the angel speak, and his voice sounded in their ears like the sweetest music. The angel said to them, "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." And he added, "If you want to see the newborn Savior, then quickly go to Bethlehem. There you will find the Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. That shall be the sign by which you shall know the Child." And while the shepherds were still filled with wonder on account of what this one angel had said to them, they already saw many other angels come down from heaven. They soared around the angel in front of the shepherds, praised God and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Then they, together with that

other angel, noiselessly soared up to heaven and vanished out of sight. Round about the shepherds it was quiet and dark again, as it had been before, but in their hearts a bright light was burning. It was the radiant light of joy. They greatly rejoiced that the Savior was born, and that God through an angel had made this known to them. So great was their joy and wonder that they could hardly contain themselves. They kept on repeating to each other what they had seen and heard. "Oh, the dear angels, how sweetly they sang!" said the one. "How friendly the angel was who spoke to us!" said the other. "But let us not forget what he made known to us!" admonished the third, the oldest one. But it was not necessary for him to remind them of the angel's words; they immediately repeated them together: "Fear not; for I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." And while they were thus repeating the words of the angel, they began to realize more and more what they meant. "God in heaven loves us; He has neither forgotten us nor His promise, which He gave to man in Paradise, and afterwards repeated so often through the mouth of His prophets. He has caused the Savior to be born; this Savior will redeem us from the hand of the Roman Caesar, lead us back to God, and grant us forgiveness of sin and eternal life; through Him we are to be made happy and blessed creatures." Such were the thoughts which moved the hearts of the shepherds, and to which they also gave expression during that holiest of all nights. The song of the many angels also was, in a measure, understood by them. "Glory in the highest!" they had sung; so the birth of the Savior is to redound to the honor and glory of God. "And on earth peace!" they had heard them sing; so peace is to come into the hearts and lives of men through this Savior, peace with God and peace with one another. "Good will toward men," were the closing words of that angelic chorus,

and the shepherds could say to themselves, "So through the Savior it is to be brought about that God will again show good will toward men, no longer looking upon them with disfavor, but regarding them as His beloved children." That was indeed something great, the beginning of an entirely new era in the history of the world.

As soon as the shepherds had somewhat cleared their minds on what the angels had said and sung that night, they also remembered that it had been told them where the Savior was born and could be found. And so they said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem, and see the thing which has come to pass, and which the Lord has made known unto us." Indeed, they also acted upon these words, and came with haste. They left the faithful dog in charge of the sheep. He was to watch them. The shepherds themselves had something more necessary to do than to herd sheep, they had to see the new-born Savior.

But how were they to find Him? The Savior was a new-born child, this they knew; He was to be found in a stable, lying in a manger, this also was plain enough. What more could the angel have told them as a sign by which they were to be guided in looking for the Savior?! How they came to go right straight to the very stable in which the Savior was, I can not tell you, but I imagine God Himself was their Guide, so that they chose the right direction in going on their important search. Having arrived at the stable, they softly opened the door, and looked in and saw both Mary and Joseph, and the Child lying in a manger. Now they knew that they had found the right place. Mary and Joseph must, of course, have been surprised when suddenly, in the middle of the night, the shepherds walked into the stable. But the shepherds told them everything they had seen and heard out in the field. They related how an angel had appeared to them, what he had said and what the many angels had sung. When Mary and Joseph heard this,

they became exceedingly glad, especially Mary; for what the shepherds related was quite in agreement with what the angel had told her in Nazareth. She had really become the mother of the Savior, through whom sinners were to be made God's beloved children. Oh, what grace of God! What indescribable fortune! Every mother rejoices when she can hold her new-born baby in her arms; but what is such happiness when compared with that of Mary! For she held in her arms the Son of God, the Savior of all men, and He lay before her eyes in that little manger of Bethlehem. The shepherds also came to the manger now and with shining eyes gazed upon the sweet child Jesus. It was a good thing the angel had told them beforehand that they would find the Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger; for otherwise they most likely would have taken offense at the poverty and lowliness by which they found the Child surrounded, and might have thought, "It is not possible that this can be the promised Son of David, the Savior of all men." But now they had been prepared, and so they were not unfavorably impressed by the sight of the poor stall and the lowly manger. The angel had spoken of these things too plainly to be misunderstood by the shepherds. What else, therefore, was left to them but to fold their hands and to thank God, who had made good His word and sent them the Savior? Through their minds passed thoughts similar to those expressed by the poet, who thus exclaims: "Let the earth exalt the Lord, who hath truly kept His word, and the sinners' Hope and Friend now at last to us doth send. What the fathers most desired, what the prophets' hearts inspired, what they longed for many a year stands fulfilled in glory here. Abram's promised great Reward, Zion's Helper, Jacob's Lord, Him of twofold race, behold, truly came, as long foretold." Their gratitude and joy was so great that they could not keep to themselves all that they had heard and seen. As soon as day had dawned they went

through the little village of Bethlehem and published the glad tidings, "The Savior is born, the Redeemer of Israel has appeared, He who is to rescue all men from sin and condemnation." Nor were they disturbed in this firm conviction if there were those who shook their heads at the message which they proclaimed; they were too sure of their ground for that, since with their own ears they had heard the angel's message, and with their own eyes they had seen the Child in the manger. So they remained as firm as a rock in their conviction that Christ, the Savior, was born.

Children, shall we not follow the example of the shepherds and let everybody hear the glad tidings that Christ, the Savior, has come into the world, that God has opened wide again the gate to Paradise? Yes, tell it to all the children who do not yet know it, so that they may rejoice with us. Call to them, "O come, little children, O come, one and all, to visit the manger in Bethlehem's stall, and see what the Father in heaven so true has done to prepare a bright Christmas for you. O see in the manger, that strange little bed, a Child, sweet and gentle, is resting its head, a babe clad in garments so pure and so white, and fairer by far than the angels of light." Let us even now sing and say to this Child:

"O dearest, O sweetest, O heavenly Child,
So pure and so holy, so good and so mild;
For us poor and weak in the manger hast lain,
And also for us like a lamb Thou wast slain.

Take Thou, then, our hearts which we offer to Thee,
And keep them from sin and from wickedness free;
Yes, let them be holy and blessed like Thine,
Thou Son of the Highest, Thou Infant divine!"

6. How the Child Jesus, Only a Short Time After Its Birth, Caused two Aged People Great Joy.

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy", said the angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem in the night when Jesus was born. Wherever the Child Jesus appears, wherever the Savior is seen and recognized, there great joy enters the hearts of men. It was so later, when Jesus had developed into manhood, and, as the great Friend of human folk and Rescuer of souls, went about among His people, traversing the different parts of the Jewish land in all directions. He brought joy to the sick by making them well, joy to the blind by giving them sight, joy to the deaf by enabling them to hear, joy also to the sinners by sleansing them from all their sins. His coming was like a ray of sunshine in the beautiful season of spring. It made the hearts of people grow warm and bright with joy. But even when Jesus was still a little Child, not more than a few weeks old, He already caused hearts and homes to be filled with the warmth of joy and gladness. Of course, almost any bright and healthy child will make us feel glad if we look into its sweet, smiling face; but the Child Jesus made people happy in an altogether different way. They were not only filled with joy because the Jesus-child looked at them with Its sparkling eyes and, as it were, pleaded for their love. No, above all else the Child Jesus incited to joy, great and deep joy, because It was the Savior, born into the world to rescue and save all men. I want to tell you today **how the Child Jesus, only a short time after Its birth, caused two aged people great joy.**

At the present time, when a child is born in a Christian home, its parents soon have it baptized. Most of you have attended such a baptism and know what is done on that occasion. Either the parents and sponsors bring the child to church, or the pastor goes to the house, offers prayer, pours three handfuls of water over the child's head, and, in

doing so, says, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Through baptism we are made the children of God. Christian parents should, therefore, not let their little ones remain unbaptized for any considerable length of time, but make it a point to have them baptized as soon as possible. What greater fortune can they bestow upon their children than to have them made the children of God? A devout French king once said that three handfuls of water were worth more to him than his royal crown. You can tell by these words how highly he regarded his baptism. When Jesus was born, little children were not yet being baptized; Christian baptism was instituted later by Jesus Himself. But instead of having their children baptized, Jewish parents had to see to it that the little boys among their children were circumcised. The Jewish father used to circumcise his own sons, according to the law. The act was performed on the eighth day after the child's birth. By the act of circumcision the little boys were not made the children of God as we became children of God through baptism, but they thus became members of the chosen people from whom the Savior was to be descended. So because the Child Jesus was born among the people of Israel, because His mother was a Jewish woman and His foster-father Joseph likewise belonged to the same people, He, like all Jewish male children, was circumcised on the eighth day after His birth. God wanted it that way; for although the Child Jesus was the eternal Son of God, It was now also a real human being, and had to submit to all the rules and regulations which God Himself had given to the people of Israel. As with us the day of baptism is observed as a day of joy, when quite often the relatives of father and mother come to be glad with them, so it was with the Jews in regard to the day of circumcision; it was a festal day of joy for the family. The relatives of Mary, of course, did not come to Bethlehem to attend the festival of circumcision;

the long distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem made that practically impossible. However, friends and neighbors of Joseph and Mary may have come to take part in their joy. Since Joseph and Mary were poor people, the celebration was probably marked by great simplicity. But even if Joseph and Mary were alone with their Child on that day, it was nevertheless a day of joy to them. Mary, in particular, must have thought of the angel's words that were told her by the shepherds, of the words, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." She must have said to herself, "O how happy I am; my Child is to be the Savior of all men; how gracious God has shown Himself in sending the world a Savior, and granting me the privilege of being the Savior's mother!" When a Jewish child was circumcised, it also was given its name, just as today baptism and the giving of the name go together. Mary and Joseph did not have to spend much time in deciding what name to give to their Child. Even before Its birth the angel of the Lord had appeared unto Joseph and told him, "Mary will bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He will save His people from their sins." Therefore they called the Child Jesus. They could not have picked out a more suitable name for Him, since Jesus was to be the Savior, and that is just what the name Jesus means. Whoever heard His name was thereby to be reminded that He had come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.

But the Jewish law did not only demand that all male children be circumcised on the eighth day after they were born into the world; the law also stated that all the first-born sons of Jewish parents belonged to God and should serve Him in the temple. However, since God had later selected the whole tribe of Levi for that purpose, so that the Levites served in the temple, making sacrifices and offering prayer for the

people, the firstborn male children, while they still had to be brought to the temple and presented to the Lord, could be redeemed from the temple service for five shekels, which was about as much as a man at that time could earn in twenty days. On the fortieth day after the birth of her first son, the mother was also to go to the temple and make an offering to God. It was to consist of a lamb one year old, and either a young or a turtle dove. But in case the parents of the child were very poor, it was to be enough for the mother to offer either two young doves or two turtle doves. The father, by paying the five shekels, was to be reminded that his son really belonged to God, and the mother was to look upon her offering as a means of thanking God who had so graciously helped her and enabled her again to appear in the temple, like other women.

Mary and Joseph, being devout Israelites, wanted to live up to all the rules of the law. So, forty days after the birth of the Child Jesus, they took It and started out for Jerusalem. Joseph took with him the five sheckels, as well as two turtle doves, presumably carrying these in a small cage. It is not far from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, only five English miles, about as far as from here to ———. If Joseph and Mary got an early start, they could be in Jerusalem before the intense heat made itself felt. In a happy frame of mind they ascended the mount upon which the temple was built. As devout Israelites, they had been there before many a time, so that they new just where to go. They knew that they were not permitted to enter into the Holy Place, or into the Holiest Place, both of which were elevated somewhat above the rest of the building. For to the Holy Place only the ordinary priests had access, while the Holiest Place could be entered only by the high priest, and that, too, only once a year, on the great Day of Atonement. They knew that they could only gain access to the Court Yard, which surrounded the Holy Place and the Holiest Place, and that

even here they had to keep within certain limits. They, therefore, passed through the temple gate into the Court Yard. Joseph soon found one of the Levites and gave him the two turtle doves. The Levite killed them both and handed them to the priest, who took the blood of the one and painted the horns of the altar with it, while he took the flesh of the other and burnt it upon the altar for burnt-offerings. Thus both of the doves had, as it were, been given or offered to God. Another priest received the money from Joseph, and still another took the Child Jesus into his hands, carried It farther into the temple, moved It to and fro before the Lord, as if to offer It to Him as His Own, and then handed It back to the parents. I dare say, Mary prayed meanwhile, and said to God, "Thou didst give me this Child, and now I give It back to Thee; but if Thou wilt return It to me, I shall not forget that It is Thy Child, and will bring It up in a manner well-pleasing to Thee." Thus the law was complied with, and Mary and Joseph could leave the temple and return to Bethlehem.

However, they had not yet left the Court Yard when something happened by which the presentation of the Christ-child in the temple was distinguished from the presentation of all the other firstborn male children in Israel. Yes, something occurred which shows us the very thing that we undertook to see, namely, how the Child Jesus, when still very small, made two aged people most happy.

In Jerusalem there lived, at that time, an aged man named Simeon (What was his name?). He had experienced a great deal during his long life. When but a boy, he had seen the Romans enter the city of Jerusalem, and from that time on they remained the chief rulers of the Jewish land. Later they made Herod king over the Jews, and he was a terrible man. He took pleasure in shedding human blood, and any number of murders were committed by him. Those were sad times for the Israelites. The Jews themselves talked a

great deal about the law of God, and many of them kept it in every particular, even going far beyond what the law required of them; but at the same time they cursed the Roman emperor and King Herod, and secretly balled their fists at their foreign rulers. The great census which just now was being taken throughout the land, and the taxes which they had to pay on the basis of it, helped to increase their enmity. In view of such events Simeon gave many a deep sigh and longed for better times. His troubled thoughts then prompted him to look for comfort in his Bible. He became especially fascinated by the promises of a Savior, which he found scattered throughout the Old Testament. In Isaiah he read, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." In Micah he hit upon the passage, "But thou Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands in Judah, out of thee shall One come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel." In Ezekiel his eyes were attracted to these words: "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep. I will seek that which was lost, and will bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Passages like these, and similar ones, he soon knew by heart, and he did not tire of repeating them to himself. In doing so, he would give vent to such expressions as, "Oh, when once the promised Savior comes, He will right what is wrong, and bring us true salvation." He looked forward to the coming of the Savior much more eagerly than you look forward to Christmas. As the caged bird longs to be set free, as a sick person wishes to get well, so Simeon ardently longed and wished for the coming of the Savior. And his wishes became prayers. He would say to God, "O do send us the promised Savior; we need Him now more than ever, as we can no longer help ourselves. The Romans are in

the land, the terrible Herod reigns, the sin of the people is very great and wickedness is constantly increasing; the leaders of the people are ever growing more selfrighteous and are constantly inventing new measures, which, however, do not lead to real peace. Make an end of our sore need and send us the promised Savior."

And God, who always shows concern for those who are sad and long for something better, said to Himself, "I must comfort this aged Simeon in a special way." He did so, too. Once when Simeon was again so fervently praying that the promised Savior might come, an inner voice suddenly said to him, "Simeon, thy longing shall be satisfied; thou wilt not die until thou hast seen the Savior." Whose was this inner voice? It was that of the Holy Spirit, whom God had sent into Simeon's heart. Simeon believed the inner voice, the words that the Spirit spoke to him, and this made his heart feel very happy. The blessed assurance that he would not see death until he had seen the Savior, made him feel young in spite of his years. Though he had to wait yet for days, months and perhaps years, he was not shaken in his sure conviction that he would not die before having seen the promised Savior of the world. It was with him as with a mother whose son is in France, and who says, "I know that I shall not pass away until my son has returned from the war and I have seen him again." Only, Simeon could be much more certain of seeing his wish fulfilled, because the Spirit of God had given him his assurance; and as often as he thought of this, his eyes would brighten in such a way as to reflect his innermost conviction, "A great joy will come to me before I depart this life."

And, behold, one day he suddenly heard again the same inner voice that had spoken to him before. This time it said to him, "Simeon, go to the temple today; there shalt thou see the Savior." Simeon did not wait to be told this a second time. Immediately he took his staff and started

out in the direction of the temple. The mount upon which the temple stood did not seem too steep to him; with an elastic step he walked along on the steep road, as if he had still been a young man. The joy that thrilled his heart in anticipation of his meeting the Savior face to face, increased his speed. If he stopped, it was not because he felt tired, but because his joy was so great as to take his breath, so that he had to stand still for a moment to regain it. At last he had arrived in the Court Yard of the temple. But how was he to find the Savior among so many different people that moved about in the Court Yard? There were priests and Levites, men with lambs for the sacrifice and women with little children upon their arms; for the Child Jesus certainly was not the only one which on that day was being presented to the Lord in the temple. There were those who entered the temple before Simeon, those who came in with him, and those who were leaving it again; how was he to discover the Savior among all these thousands of people? How was he to know Him? He did not know how He looked and how old he was.

The aged Simeon, however, was not shaken in his faith. He said to himself, "Since my God has told me to go to the temple today and see the Savior, He will also tell me where He is and where I may find Him". Just then some more people came out of the inner parts of the Court Yard, farther toward the middle; it was a man, accompanied by his wife, and she carried a baby on her arm, a little bright-eyed Boy, looking so dear as to attract almost anybody's attention. The man carried in his hand an empty cage, in which he had probably taken doves to the temple for an offering to the Lord. We already know who these people were. They were Mary and Joseph, who had just finished presenting their Child to the Lord. Involuntarily Simeon's eyes became fixed upon the little Boy babe on Mary's arm, when suddenly he heard again that inner voice, which plainly said

to him, "This is the Christ-child; this is the Savior who is to redeem the world." O how Simeon's heart leaped for joy! Nor did he lose any time in making up his mind as to how he might approach Mary and Joseph, and make inquiries about their Child. He walked right straight up to the mother, and took the Child out of her arms, and pressed It to his heart. He did not even notice how surprised Mary looked and how completely dazed Joseph stood at her side. His one desire was to see the Savior, as the Lord had promised he would on that day.

And he did see Him. For some moments he quietly gazed upon Him, desirous of having all His features impressed upon his mind, so that he might retain them up to the very last hour of his life. Hardly can a mother look into the eyes of her child so intently as Simeon looked into the eyes of the Child Jesus. Simeon's whole face was aglow with a heavenly light; it was the happiest day of his long earthly life. After he had looked upon the Child for some time in rapturous silence, he opened his lips to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God, who had granted him the great joy of this hour. He was entirely unconcerned about those who passed by and stood about; he was forgetful of his surroundings, and all his thoughts were directed toward God, as he said in tones of ecstasy, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to enlighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel." He wanted to say, "I thank Thee, O Thou faithful God, that Thou hast kept Thy promise, sending the Savior and permitting me to see Him; now I am ready to die." And notice, he calls the Child the light of the Gentiles. So he has learned from the prophets that Jesus is to be the Savior of all nations, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles, to bring light into their darkness. The salvation, the redemption to be wrought by this Child

will be so great as to make all the people of the earth praise the Jewish people, among whom the grace of God caused such a Bringer of salvation to be born.

Mary and Joseph wondered at the joy of aged Simeon and at the words that came from his prophetic lips. Mary knew indeed that her Child was to become the promised Savior, but how did Simeon all of a sudden come to know about these things, so that he could be so happy because of them and speak with such assurance of the future of her Child? She must have looked at Simeon rather inquiringly, and he noticed this, no doubt. For he turned to Mary now, blessed her and Joseph, and then went on to say to her concerning the future of the Child, "Behold, this Child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed." What Simeon wanted to say with these words was this: "However small and unimportant thy Child may seem now, some day It will be of the greatest importance to the whole people of Israel. Just as one may stumble over a large stone lying right in the middle of the road, and thus suffer a fall, while, on the other hand, one may cling to a large stone and by its aid rise up, so many of our people will take offense at thy Son and thus be lost, while others will stretch forth their hand to gain a hold on Him and thus arise unto eternal life. This Child will be like a sign or standard, raised high, and visible from all directions. Upon it will be written the words, "In Me Alone Is There Salvation and Eternal Happiness for All the World." Some will believe it and be saved, others will not believe it and thus bring condemnation upon themselves. Death and life, salvation and condemnation will henceforth be linked to this Child. No one shall become justified before God and be saved for eternity except by faith in this Child Jesus, and no one shall be lost for any other reason than that of refusing to

accept this Child as his Savior. There will indeed be many of the latter class, people who will have nothing to do with the Child, who, on the contrary, will inflict great suffering upon their Savior, so that it will be to thee, Mary, as if a sword pierced thy very heart." Such was the meaning of what Simeon said to Mary. It is not likely that she understood everything, but she remembered all his words. Later, when the Jews crucified Jesus and Mary witnessed His crucifixion, the pain that she experienced was indeed such that it felt as if a sword were being thrust through her heart. And afterwards she also learned to understand how people are through Christ divided into two great divisions: into those who are for Him and those who are against Him; those who are for Him being thereby justified and saved, and those who are against Him bringing condemnation upon themselves. That her Child was to be very great and of the utmost importance to the whole world, Mary could understand even when she listened to the words of aged Simeon. May we not say, then, that her heart was also made glad by what Simeon foresaw with regard to the Child's future?

But when we spoke of two aged people whom the Christchild caused to be very happy, we had in mind, not Simeon and Mary, but Simeon and another woman, who was more like him in point of age. It was the pious and devout Anna. She had already reached her eightyfourth year, and there was no place that she liked so well as the temple. She agreed with the Psalmist who says, "One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand other days." She knew that the oftener she went to the temple, the nearer she was to the Lord, her God. In the temple she could take part in the daily devotions which were conducted by the priests both in the morning and in the afternoon, when they made the burnt offering in the Holy Place. In the temple she could see the numerous sacrifices for sin and guilt, sacrifices which, as she realized, were all prophetic of the great offering for sin

that the Messiah, the promised Savior, was to make for His people. Like Simeon, Anna belonged to those among the Jews who waited for the coming of the Savior and found comfort as they thought of Him in those evil times. They were sure that He would correct all wrongs and usher in a new, blessed time for His people Israel. Anna, this devout woman, was in the temple also on the day when the Child Jesus was presented there, and when she heard the words of aged Simeon concerning the Child, she lost no time in coming nearer to It. This is the moment which the artist has tried to represent here in our picture. We see aged Anna leaning on her staff for support as she approaches the Babe in Simeon's arms. She is not going to miss the chance to see the Savior, for whose coming she has waited all these years. Having seen Him, her heart is filled with joy, and from her lips issue words of praise to God, who has so graciously kept His word and sent the promised Redeemer into the world. "Let the earth exalt the Lord, who hath truly kept His word, and the sinner's Help and Friend now at last to us doth send. What the fathers most desired, what the prophets' heart inspired, what they longed for many a year stands fulfilled in glory here." Such was the burden of her song. She said it so plainly that all who wanted to could hear and understand it, "Christ, the Savior, has come."

That was surely the happiest day of her life, and she could say with Simeon, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Mary and Joseph now returned to Bethlehem even more joyfully than they had come from there on their way to Jerusalem; for again God had caused them to be told that Mary's Child was the promised Savior and Redeemer. But Simeon and Anna were, if anything, still happier; having seen Him for whose gracious coming they had waited so long and with such intense ardor. Since they were very old, they soon had to depart this life; however, theirs was a happy

end, because they thought of the Savior, and, by faith in Him, had peace with God. Thus they passed into a happy and blessed beyond.

In September, 1915, when the terrible war had already been in progress for a whole year, a severely wounded soldier went into convulsions. In such a state one knows everything that is going on about him, but at times has to suffer the most intense pain. While this soldier was lying in the hospital and the most terrible pains were shooting through his wounded body, he was visited by a pastor who asked him, whether he still knew the hymn, "Take, then, my hands and lead me." The soldier said that he did, and when the pastor recited it to him he repeated it word for word, including the last stanza, "Though naught of Thy great power may move my soul, with Thee through night and darkness I reach the goal." Two nurses now came in to wait on him, and while they were renewing his bandages and giving him a change of garments, he repeatedly exclaimed, "Glorious, glorious!" They thought he was just expressing his joy on account of his having been freshly washed and clothed; however, he meant it differently, for he spoke those words even during the moments when he was having the very worst pain. Once, when he, right in the midst of those convulsions, again had repeated the words, "Glorious, glorious!" the pastor asked him, in a low tone, "What is it that you find so glorious?" The soldier, sick unto death, made this reply: "I see over me the angel who is leading me to the Savior." He so longed to be led to the Savior, although it was to be through the portals of death, that, forgetting all pain, he could but say, "Glorious, glorious!" Children, whether we shall, at the hour of death, see the angel that shall lead us to the Savior, that does not matter so much. But everything depends upon our being with the Savior in heaven when we depart this life. For only He, the Savior, can fill our hearts with true joy, and cause everything to be very glorious. So let us fold our hands and say to one an-

other: "Let me go, let me go, Lord, to me Thy presence show; thither still my heart is turning, for Thy heavenly courts in yearning, there Thy perfect rest to know." And if we are in real earnest about it, as Simeon and Anna were, then we, too, shall see the Lord, but in great power and glory, and that will fill our hearts with joy unspeakable, with joy that no man shall take from us.

7. How the First Gentiles Came to the Child Jesus.

Simeon had spoken of the Child Jesus as the Light of the Gentiles, thus giving vent to the important truth that Jesus was to become the Savior, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles. When we speak of the Gentiles, we mean all those people who do not belong to the people of Israel, and aged Simeon also used the word Gentiles in this sense. He wanted to say that Jesus would be the Savior of all men, that all men should be brought to the light of salvation that had dawned in Israel when the Savior was born. Nor was it very long before the words of Simeon began to come true. It is my pleasure to be able to tell you this morning **how the first Gentiles came to the Child Jesus.**

These first Gentiles that came to the Child Jesus did not live in Jerusalem, nor in Bethlehem, nor anywhere else in the Jewish land. With the exception of Roman soldiers and a few officials, the holy land was at that time inhabited only by Jews. The Gentiles of whom I shall speak lived far toward the east of the land in which the Savior was born. The Bible, therefore, simply speaks of their having come from the East. Most likely their home was in Babylonia, where Abraham used to live before he, in obedience to God's command, came to the land of Canaan. The Bible tells us that Abraham dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees, it is known, however, that Chaldaea was only a part of those regions which went by the common name of Babylonia. Here in

Babylonia (map!), then, we must look for the home of the first Gentiles who came to Bethlehem, to worship the Savior. In order to reach the land of the Jews and visit the village of Bethlehem, they had to travel a very long distance. It must have taken them fully three weeks to complete that journey. They started out in a northern direction, along the river Euphrates, until they arrived at Reheboth. By that time they had already been on the road a good while. Then they made the journey across to Damascus, which was another long stretch. But they had to get started once more and travel in a southeastern direction as far as Lake Gennesaret, and then go straight south, thus successively arriving at Shechem, Bethel, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. How was it possible for those Gentiles, who lived so far away from Bethlehem, to hear of the Savior's birth? Did an angel appear to them as he did to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and tell them that Christ, the Savior, was born? No, God did not send them an angel, and yet, He let them know what had taken place, though in a very peculiar way. If I am to make this plain to you, it will be necessary for me to dwell on the matter somewhat at length.

From the remotest time, the Babylonians had been of the opinion that everything which happens on earth is but a fulfillment of things foretold by the stars above. The movements of the sun, the moon and the stars, their relative position to one another, their disappearance and reappearance, these are the factors that determine events here on earth. So if one desires to understand life on this planet, and even gain a foreknowledge of events lying in the future, he must be able to read this "script of the stars", as they used to call the various figures formed by the grouping of the stars. For this reason, there was in Babylonia a class of men who did not do anything else besides carefully studying the position and movements of the stars, so that in this way they might be enabled to understand all the events that happened or

that were going to occur at some future time. In most cases these star-gazers, whom we call astrologers, were also priests; for the Babylonians regarded the sun and the moon as gods, since nothing else seemed to them to have such a marked influence upon the lives of men. In very ancient times the Babylonians used to write and draw on tablets made of soft clay. After the inscription was made, the tablets were rendered hard by a burning process, and put away on shelves, just as we put our books on shelves in our libraries. On such tablets they had also made maps of the stars, and kept accurate records of their different positions, the time of their appearance, their direction from the sun, and the orbits which they described. So the later astrologers, who had access to these records, were able quickly to figure out how long it would take for this or that star to appear, how soon it would again disappear, what path it traveled, and the like. They were, of course, mistaken if they believed that they could tell by the stars what was going to happen in the world. Almighty God was not going to let the stars decide what He should bring to pass here on earth. But that the Babylonians, in making such a thorough study of the stars, gained a great deal of correct information, must be readily admitted. To them we can trace our calendar, with its division of time into days, weeks and years; the method by which astronomers even now figure out the positions of the different stars; the ability to observe the courses of the planets; the various figures formed by the stars, and represented by the ram, the fish, and other symbols, all of which you may look up in your calendar at home. Because of the ancient records made by the Babylonians, we are able even now to find out how the stars stood thousands of years ago.

To these Babylonians belonged the Gentiles of whom I am telling you today, the first ones that came in contact with the Child Jesus. They were astrologers, men who made a very accurate study of the stars, and who knew the map of the

heavens above quite as well, or better, than we know the map of the earth. Like all Babylonians, they were very much inclined to look toward the land west of them, which, with its mighty and mysterious sea, gave promise of becoming the scene of all kinds of great future events. From the time when the Jews were in captivity at Babylon for a period of seventy years, the Babylonians, no doubt, also knew something of the Jewish expectation that in their land, which lay westward on the Mediterranian Sea, a great king would be born, to rule over all the people of the earth. The Babylonian astrologers, those same wise men with whom we are now busying our thoughts, could not but believe that the birth of such a great king would surely be written in the stars. In this belief they were strengthened by a Jewish prophecy, of which they had probably heard; this prophecy read thus: "There shall come forth a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel." The more they reflected on the matter, the more they were confirmed in their conviction that the birth of that great king would not occur without having been announced by the stars in one way or another.

One evening these men had again ascended to the place from which they usually observed the stars. Whether it was on the roof of their house or on some high tower, I am unable to say; but undoubtedly it was a high place from which they had an open outlook upon the starry canopy overhead. At the present time astronomers, in studying the stars, make use of large telescopes through which one can see the stars greatly enlarged. When we look through such a telescope, the moon appears many, many times as large as we see it with the naked eye. Such telescopes were unknown to the Babylonians, but they had learned to observe very accurately with their eyes, and even the smaller stars did not escape their attention. Now, when on that particular evening these Babylonian star-gazers were so intently looking up to the heavens above them (there may have been three of them engaged in the work), they

suddenly spied a star which they had never noticed before. Immediately they looked upon their star-maps, but there they found no such star recorded. This surprised them above all measure; one called to the other, "Just look at this star; it is one the like of which we have never seen heretofore." All three of them examined the star very closely, but each one came to the same conclusion: "this is a wonderful new star." It was probably a constellation of several stars, the like of which does not commonly occur. Protestant astronomers have figured out that it probably was a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn, which took place about that time, and which was supplemented a year later by the addition of the planet Mercury. Be this as it may, at all events our Babylonian astrologers saw an unusual, wonderful star, or constellation of stars. And when they reflected on the question as to what event on earth this star might be related, God put it into the heart of one of them to say to the others, "The rising of his star does not mean anything else but the rise of a new king, and since it is such a particularly bright combination of the most important stars, it must mean the rise of a king who is destined to rule over all other kings. But such a king is to rise out of Israel, and the sign of the fish in which the combination of these stars has occurred, also points to the Israelites; so that great King must have been born now, whom all people will serve." He spoke these words with great certainty, since God made him certain of the truth. God, you should be aware, has many different ways of talking to people. To us He talks through His word, the Holy Scriptures, to Jacob He talked through a dream, to the shepherds through an angel, to the star-gazers of Babylonia through the stars. The other two astrologers agreed at once to what the first one had expressed, and joined him in saying, "Yes, that is the star of the new-born King of the Jews." God Himself saw to it that no doubt whatever arose in their hearts.

When those three star-gazers had been made quite sure that the King of the Jews must have been born, to whom all people were going to bow the knee, they said to one another, "If the King of the Jews is born in their country, then let us go there, fall down before Him, and worship Him; for in Him all salvation will be centered, He will become the mighty Savior for all the world." And at once they made the necessary preparations for the journey. They knew that they would have a long and also dangerous road to travel, but that did not keep them back; they were bound to see the great King, the Savior of the world. They, as well as their attendants, rode on camels and asses; for these magi or astrologers must have been very wealthy men; our artists even represent them as having been kings. As such rich men, they did not want to go before the new-born King with empty hands, so they selected the best things they possessed for a gift to the King: gold, incense and myrrh. Whether the gold had been coined into money, or made up into chains, or was still in bars, we can not tell. Incense is the rosin of a rare tree; when you burn it, a very pleasant odor is produced. Myrrh is the juice of a tree; when it dries up, little brown balls remain, and if these are lighted, they also emit an odor which is most agreeable. In the East incense and myrrh were often burned in a room when some noted guest was expected, in order that he might find the atmosphere of the room agreeable. Such gifts the magi or Babylonians took with them for the purpose of presenting them to the new-born King and thus showing Him honor. When everything was in readiness, they mounted their beasts of burden and started on their journey to the Jewish land.

The way was not hard to find; they only needed to follow the great mercantile highway which led up to Reheboth, across to Damascus and then down to Lake Gennesaret and Jerusalem. For it seemed self-evident to them that if they wanted to see the new-born King of the Jews they would

have to go to Jerusalem, this being the capital city of the Jewish land, the city in which their king had his residence. Where else were they to find the new-born King of the Jews if not in the royal palace? So after a long and tedious journey they at last arrived in Jerusalem pretty well tired out. We can imagine how interested the boys and others in Jerusalem were when these magi made their appearance. Of course, they saw camels every day, and Jerusalem was also frequently visited by strangers; however, these men from the far East, with their fine garments, their stately camels and their strange looking servants, were after all a rather unusual sight and could not help attracting the attention of the city populace. When it was heard that they wanted to pay a visit to king Herod, people became even more interested in them and regarded them with great curiosity. But the people in Jerusalem were not to feast their eyes on those strangers very long. As soon as they had made their toilet and looked presentable again after their long, dusty journey, they wended their way to the palace of King Herod, and when the heavy door leading to the royal court-yard had closed back of them, the curious people of Jerusalem could not see them any more. Having arrived at the royal palace, the Babylonians immediately had their arrival announced to King Herod. He received them in one of the finest rooms of his palatial residence, and was, naturally, curious to know what they wanted of him. The three men introduced themselves to him, told him that they were men who busied themselves with the study of the stars in far distant Babylonia, and made it plain to him that they had seen a very peculiar star whose appearance could not mean anything else than that the long expected King of the Jews must now be born. They also intimated that King Herod would be likely to know where they might find the new-born King and do Him homage. Said they to him, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? We

have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him." Stated in a few words, this was their message to the king.

But if they had thought King Herod would at once give them a clear and unmistakeable reply to their question, or even take them directly to the new-born King, they were to be thoroughly disappointed. Herod, some way, did not seem to understand what they were talking about. He was a godless man who cared nothing for God's word and never paid any attention to the prophecies of the Old Testament, according to which a Descendant of King David was some day to become the Savior of the world. His mind was entirely concerned with earthly affairs, and his only aim was to remain king at Jerusalem as long as possible. That the Savior was already born, and staying with Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem only a few miles away, had not entered his remotest dreams. So he was indeed greatly surprised to hear the words of the wise men from the East, and really did not know what to make of them. He was, however, not only surprised, but also greatly startled, since he reasoned thus within himself: "If it is true that a new king has been born before whom even these men from far distant lands are ready to bow the knee, then my own days are numbered, and before long I will no longer be king of the Jews any more." And with Herod the whole city of Jerusalem was alarmed at the words of these wise men from the East; for the people knew what an extremely cruel king Herod was, and they thought to themselves, "Now another series of murders will be committed; for Herod will not rest until he has killed every one whom he suspects of being the new-born king of the Jews." Indeed, Herod wanted to remain king at any price. For this reason he soon collected his thoughts and said to himself, "I shall find out where this new-born King is, and then have Him put to death, so that he may not, in the course of time, deprive me of my royal throne." So he acted as if he were very much concerned about helping the wise men from

the East find the new-born Savior. He quickly dispatched a messenger to the scribes, and through him spoke to them as follows: "You always claim to be at home in the Bible; therefore, tell me at once: where is the great King, the Savior of the nations, to be born? I must know it right away. Your information must be stricly reliable at that." The scribes must have deemed it very strange that the wicked king, who until now had not cared a snap for the Bible and its promises, suddenly confronted them with such a question. But whatever might have been his reasons for putting this question to them, they certainly were able to answer it without delay and in the most reliable manner. Without hesitating a moment, they said to the king's messenger, "The promised King and Savior is to be born in Bethlehem; for thus it is written in the book of the prophet Micah: 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel.'" That was all Herod cared to find out. He knew now where to find the Child Jesus, the new-born King of the Jews. But in Bethlehem there were a great many children, one, two, tree, four and more years old; he therefore wanted to ascertain now about how old the Child Jesus might be. This the astrologers from Babylonia were to tell him. So he said to them, "Tell me, my dear men, when did you see that wonderful star for the first time?" They told him, of course, that it was only a very short time ago when they first noticed the star. As a result, Herod was also informed as to the approximate age of the Child, and he said to himself, "It is among the children who are not more than one or two years old that I must look for the new-born King. Well, now I shall soon find him." And in his heart he laughed like one who wants to do something very wicked and at last can see his way clear to carry his evil will into effect. But to the men from Babylonia he said in the most friendly terms, "Go to Bethlehem now, and search for

the Child most diligently, and when you have found It, bring me word, that I also may come and worship It." The men thought that he was sincere in telling them this, so they promised him to return and give him the desired information concerning the Child. They may have wondered why Herod did not go with them to Bethlehem at once, and why the scribes did not go there either. They may have said to themselves, "If we, being Gentiles, have come such a long distance to look for the new-born King, then these Jews should at least be anxious to walk the few miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and worship Him through whom their nation is to be made so great and renowned." But if those who were nearest to the Child, the Jews, did not go to Bethlehem, then at least they, as Gentiles, were determined to go there; not in vain was God to have told them of the great event by means of that wonderful star.

So they left for Bethlehem that very same night. They had been told the way there, and, besides, it was only a matter of a few miles. Why, then, should they have waited any longer? Their hearts were burning to see the new-born King. And, strange to say, when they were on their way and night came on, they suddenly saw again the star which had appeared to them in the East. They looked up to the star very closely and examined it very carefully, as if to make sure that they were not mistaken. Nor were they deceiving themselves, it was indeed the very same combination of stars. How glad they were then! Now they had a sure sign that they were on the right way. God had intended it so. It seemed to them as if that star were going right ahead of them, and showing them where to direct their steps. And, really, the farther they went in the direction of the star ahead of them, the nearer they drew to Bethlehem. When they had arrived in the village, it seemed to them that the star stood still right above a certain house. That may have been only an illusion; but those star-students

who in all things liked to follow the stars said to one another, "Let us enter the house over which the star is standing; it very likely is the house in which the new-born King may be found." So they climbed down from their camels, left them, as well as the gifts, in charge of their servants some of whom were to follow with the gifts if the house proved to be the right one, and walked toward the door of the house. The latter most likely looked small and humble enough, but that did not disturb them. They knew the history of different people well enough to be aware of the fact that very great men and kings are sometimes born in poverty and lowliness. So they opened the door and crossed the threshold of that humble house in Bethlehem. And what did they see there? A plain looking man with his young wife, and upon her lap a little Boy. The Child had no crown upon Its head. There was no cradle suitable for a prince. Nor was there a halo above Its head, as we see it in pictures. And there were no angels with harps in their hands. It did not look different than other children. Everything was neat and clean, but also poor and plain. This again might have given the wise men from the East offense. They might have said to one another, "We expected to see the Child of a king, and here we have been led to the Child of common people. Of such there are enough in Babylonia. We might have spared ourselves the long journey. The star has deceived us." But they thought and said nothing of the kind. They trusted the star more firmly than many Christians trust the word of God. Deep down in their hearts a voice told them, "This is after all the Child for which you are looking, the new-born King of the Jews." They believed what the inner voice told them, and in spirit they already foresaw the Child as a great King, as the Savior of all men, including the Gentile or heathen nations. In this firm faith they fell down before the Child and worshiped It. They knew very little in detail concerning the Child's future, and the great importance which It

was to gain for the whole world only appeared before their mental vision in general outlines; but what little they did know was sufficient to make them bow the knee to the Child, so that they might share the blessing which through this Child was to be wrought for all the nations of the earth.

At their beck and call the servants now came into the house with the case that contained the gifts for the Child. They spread the gold out before Mary and her Babe; of the incense and myrrh they may have burned some right then and there, as the artist has shown it here in our picture, so that the finest odors arose to the Child and filled the entire house. Then they must also have satisfied Mary's curiosity, which by this time had become thoroughly aroused. They told her about the star which they had seen in the far East, and now again on their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. They mentioned the fact that it stood right above the house in which Mary and Joseph were living. They may even have led Mary and Joseph outside and shown them that wonderful star. Mary, on the other hand, told them what the angel had announced to her concerning the Child, even before Its birth; what the angel had proclaimed to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and what Simeon had foretold of It in the temple at Jerusalem. That made the three men, who belonged to the Gentile nations, look at the Child with increased wonder and reverence; and they were deeply impressed by all that they learned about Its future importance for Israel and also for the Gentiles. Both Mary and the wise men were thus strengthened and confirmed in their faith, that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world, and their hearts were filled with emotions of great joy. It stands to reason that they did not go to bed any too soon that night; they had so much to talk about, and so many things prompted them to sing God's praises. But when they finally had gone to bed, the angel of the Lord appeared to the wise men in a dream and said to them, "Do

not go back to Herod; he only wants to find out where the Child is, so that he may kill It." This the wise men did not need to be told twice; they arose early the next morning, and returned to their home by another way.

Thus you see, children, how the first Gentiles came to the Child Jesus and thereby were made happy, so that we might know most certainly that Jesus is also the Savior of the Gentile nations. The first Gentiles God Himself led to the Christ; today we Christians are to take the Lord Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. That is why we carry on mission work among the Gentiles or heathen; the Christian missionaries take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the heathen. That is why we sing our mission hymns, such as this one:

"The heathen in their sore distress
My deep compassion win;
O God, regard their helplessness,
For they are dead in sin."

That is why we pray for the work of mission and make offerings for this great cause. It would be commendable if next Sunday each one of you would bring something for mission work. Empty your saving banks and bring their contents to me, so that you may, on your part, help to send missionaries to the poor heathen and thus tell them of the Savior, that they may come to Him. But, children, while you lend your help in bringing the Savior to the Gentiles, seek the Savior in your own behalf most diligently, that you may find Him and by Him be saved. You do not need to travel so far as those wise men from the East. Do you know where you may find Him? You may find Him in the Bible, in church, here in Sunday school; for He Himself says, "Search the Scriptures, for ye think that in them ye have eternal life, and it is they that bear testimony of Me." If you take pleasure in listening to the beautiful Jesus-stories, and believe all the great and glorious things which they tell you about

Him, then Jesus, the Savior of the whole world, has come to you, and you to Him, and then your little hearts, like those of the first Gentiles that came to Jesus, will be filled with true joy and gladness.

Seek ye Jesus Christ to win,
No one else can save from sin.

8. How the Child Jesus Was Saved From Great Danger.

In explaining the seventh petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther calls this world a vale of sorrow. Some have objected to this term as being somewhat extreme. They are of the opinion that Luther, in referring to this world as a vale of sorrow, used language that is too strong to be taken without certain modifications. Children, in particular, find it hard to understand the fitness of this expression. Take your own selves for an example. With father and mother to care for you, with freedom from sickness and pain, with a sense of keen delight in song and play, you regard the world as being quite satisfactory. Why it should be called a vale of sorrow, does not seem quite intelligible to you. I am not blaming you for that, nor would I rob you of your joyful disposition. Children, more than all other people, are entitled to a happy frame of mind. Let older folks do the worrying and fretting. Still, I rather think that at times you children may also have occasion to see this world in a somewhat different light, and to realize, at least to a certain extent, that we are justified in terming it a vale of sorrow. Here is a child that loses its father, who had earned the daily bread for the whole family; when such a thing happens, even children can not help shedding tears, and if they could understand as fully as grown people what such a loss means, their tears would dry much more slowly. Or, it happens that a group of little children loses its mother, who was a real mother to

her children, to whom they could go with all their cares and troubles, who was always ready to cheer, comfort and advise them. When children thus, through the death of their parents, remain in the world as orphans, they begin to see the rough side of things, and learn to realize that life is not all sunshine, that along with fun and enjoyment go trouble and worriment. Or, how is it when children themselves are taken sick, have to suffer intense pain, and can find no relief? Think of the many small children who but recently were stricken with infantile paralysis and either died or were made lame for the rest of their life here on earth. Parents could then see, and children experience it in their own bodies, that this world is indeed a vale of sorrow. The full meaning of this term, however, you can not understand until you recall how sin dwells in your hearts, ever again enticing you to do wrong and dissuading you from doing what is right. Is it not, indeed, lamentable if you time and again resolve to be more obedient to your parents and keep God's commandment better than heretofore, but just as often forget about your good resolutions and grieve both your parents and your teachers anew? It seems to me that this is most lamentable, and teachers and parents are thereby made to heave many a sigh. So Luther had his good reason for calling this world a vale of sorrow. Even the Child Jesus had to experience this, although It was Son of God and free from sin. On the other hand, It also experienced that in the midst of all the sorrow and danger of this world there is an almighty Helper, shielding His own from danger and rescuing them even from the most perilous condition, so that they may suffer no harm or injury. I am going to tell you this morning **how the Child Jesus was exposed to great danger, but also wonderfully rescued by God Himself.**

From the very hour of Its birth the Child Jesus came in contact with the hardships of life. He was born under the most humble circumstances. He lay in a manger on a bed

of hay and straw. Nor was His further care such as is accorded to a royal child. As the Son of Mary and Joseph, He enjoyed only such comforts as plain people are able to provide for their offspring. The days that the Child Jesus spent in Bethlehem with His parents were marked by the usual discomforts and privations to which people of moderate income must submit. But the Child became exposed to real danger through King Herod. You remember from last Sunday how Herod was startled when he heard of a new-born king of the Jews. He said to himself, "Here I thought that I had made away with all those who could possibly deprive me of my royal throne. I had my wife and my two sons murdered; I have also had other relations of mine put to death; whoever ventured to say a word against me and my government was promptly captured and executed. However cruel and bloody a deed may have seemed, I did not shrink from committing it, in order to cure all others from any desire to become king in my place. I flattered myself that there was no one left to endanger my throne. And here comes the report that a new king of the Jews has been born." Yes, children, Herod was a man of that type. His hands were stained over and over with human blood; he had committed so many murders that no one felt sure of his life, or could be at all happy, in his presence. The Roman emperor is said to have made the remark that he would rather be the pig than the son of Herod. You know, the Jews were not permitted to eat pork, and the emperor meant to say that a pig would be safer in Herod's presence than his own son. But if Herod was such a cruel tyrant, such a relentless murderer, sparing the life of no one whom he suspected of endangering his throne, we can easily imagine what plans he immediately began to devise with reference to the new-born king of whom the wise men from the East had spoken. Inwardly raging, he said to himself, "Ha! I know what I will do; it will not be long until I shall have

put this new born King out of the world. What matters it to me that He is said to be the promised Savior of the world, of whom the prophets have spoken? What do I care about the prophets anyway? And as for a Savior, I do not need any. These foolish astronomers who have made this long journey from Babylonia here to Jerusalem shall lend me their help, in order that I may get this new-born King of the Jews into my hands." So, as you will recall, he pretended to be very pious and said to the wise men from the East, "When you have found the Child, come and bring me word, that I also may go to Bethlehem and worship Him." The old hypocrite! He was indeed anxious to find out where the Child Jesus was, however, for quite a different purpose; he wanted to kill It. Poor Child, Thou hast left Thy heavenly throne and taken upon Thyself human flesh and blood, in order to redeem all men and make them the children of God, and here they are trying to murder Thee before Thou hast really begun Thy saving work. Can God allow this? Can Thy heavenly Father keep silent while such schemes are brewing?

To be sure, it seems as if He were not intending to stir a hand to save the Child Jesus from death. The wise men, it is true, did not return to Jerusalem and tell Herod where the Child Jesus was, but Herod imagined that he knew of another sure way of destroying the life of the new-born king of the Jews. Day after day he waited for the return of the wise men; he had undoubtedly given orders to bring them to him at once when they came. Perhaps he himself had at times stood upon the roof of his palace and looked in the direction of Bethlehem, hoping that the wise men would soon make their appearance. When the second and the third day had passed by without bringing back the wise men, Herod's wrath was boundless because, as he viewed it, the wise men had deceived him; however, this did not make him give up his murderous plan, but only prompted him to execute it so much more cruelly. For he said to himself, "'Tis well;

I do not know the new-born King, but I know that He is in Bethlehem, and that, at the most, He can not be more than two years old; so I will have all the little children in and around Bethlehem who are not more than two years old put to death, and the Child Jesus will then certainly be killed along with the others." He did not think of the little children, who were so entirely innocent; he did not think of the mothers, whose hearts would break if he bereaved them of their little darlings; least of all did he think of God, who surely would punish such a bloody deed; he only thought of himself, and reasoned thus: "It will be the safest way of making away with the Child Jesus, and after that is effected, my throne will be secure."

Without taking any further time for reflection, he called one of the most cruel of his military officers and said to him, "Take a band of my fiercest soldiers, march down to Bethlehem with them, and mercilessly slay all the little children that are under two years of age; do not let one of them escape. Remember, it will cost you your own head if you do not carry my orders into effect." These words made even the rough fighter jerk back. He would not have hesitated to go into battle against the enemy; but to kill innocent little children, went against the grain with him. And he would have done the right thing if he had said to the king, "Your majesty, I am ready to lay down my life for my country; but to murder little innocent children, that is something I must refuse to do." However, he probably feared the king's wrath. So he marched down to Bethlehem with the soldiers, to perform the bloody work with which the king had charged him.

The children were playing in the streets of Bethlehem. Those among them who were somewhat older than the others, guarded the smaller ones, and watched them romping about, laughing at everything they said or did. For when children arrive at the age of from one to two years, they furnish a

great deal of merriment for the older ones, whom they try to imitate both in speech and in action. Suddenly the children heard the beating of a drum and the tramp, tramp, tramp of soldiers marching into the village street. When soldiers enter our city, you children are not afraid of them, because you know they will do you no harm. Instead of running away from them, you even walk right along side or immediately back of them, until you think it is time for you to return home or to school. In Bethlehem it was different. When Herod's soldiers appeared on the scene, it never meant anything good. In less then no time the children had all disappeared from the street. They fled into their different houses, to stay with their mother. The larger girls carried the smaller children on their arms, so as to be out of sight with them as soon as possible. But it did them no good. The soldiers followed them right into their homes. Each house was visited by one or several of the soldiers. They had drawn their swords, and soon one heard, not the merry laughter of happy children, but screaming, crying and lamenting, from all the houses in the village. In vain the mothers fled with their little ones into the remotest and darkest corner of the house; in vain they tried to hide them under the bed or somewhere else; the soldiers found them all, and not one little child was spared. After a few hours had thus passed by, the soldiers rallied, sheathed their bloody swords, and, marching to the beat of the drum, returned to Jerusalem. The cruel deed was done. They could report to Herod that not a single child up to two years of age had escaped.

Then the Child Jesus was also killed? He would indeed have been put to death with the other little ones had not God held His hand over Him and rescued Him from the great danger that had threatened His life. But God's eye watched over the Child, and the angels were kept unusually busy for a number of days. They had to carry out the commands of God for the protection of His Child. In the

same night when the wise men from the East had bowed their knees before the Child Jesus, an angel appeared to them in a dream and told them, "Do not return to Herod." That was all they needed to be told. Early in the morning they arose and returned to Babylonia by another way, probably the one leading through Jericho, across the Jordan and then northward to Damascus. That same night God also sent an angel to Joseph, had him wake Joseph out of a sound sleep, and say to him, "Arise and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and stay there until I tell thee to return; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." Joseph did not need to hear this more than once. The orders which he had received seemed strange indeed. Just the evening before he had been so happy because of the wise men who came all the way from Babylonia, worshiped the Child and made Him the recipient of so many rich gifts. And now he is to flee in the night, leave everything cumber-some in Bethlehem, and with the small Child start out on the long and dangerous way to Egypt, a land where he does not know a soul, and where it will be hard for him to make a living at his trade, he being a foreigner, entirely unfamiliar with the language of the people. But it was an angel who gave him his orders, and he was used to rendering obedience. So he rose from his bed in a hurry, roused Mary from her slumbers, packed up a few of the most necessary things, drew the donkey out of the stable, and set Mary and the Child upon it. Noiselessly they left the village; before the dawn of the morning they were already on the way leading to Gaza and from there down to Egypt. The evening before Joseph may have thought, "What are we to do with the rich gifts of the wise men? What use, in particular, can we make of this incense and myrrh? They really do not belong into this humble dwelling." Now, however, Joseph could plainly see for what purpose God had caused these gifts to be bestowed upon the Child Jesus, and so he carried them right

near his body, carefully hidden away. When the opportunity presented itself, he could sell these gifts, and thereby he would realize enough money, not only to pay his expenses on the way, but also to provide for himself and his family in Egypt. How wonderfully God had made all things work together for their good! So Joseph walked along quite free from care. Their wants were supplied for some time, and God would make further provision for them later. When the soldiers of Herod arrived in Bethlehem, Joseph, with Mary and the Child, had already journeyed for several days and probably had reached the border of the Jewish land. Now, though the soldiers might report to Herod that not a single child had escaped their sword, and though Herod, in his wickedness, might rejoice at the thought of having thus put out of the world also the new-born King of the Jews, the Child Jesus was nevertheless rescued from all danger, God Himself having watched over Him and prevented His assassination. Yes, the Lord preserveth all them that love Him. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them. Whom God wishes to rescue, no Herod can destroy. That is why we so trustfully sing:

"Thou everywhere hast sway,
And all things serve Thy might;
Thy every act pure blessing is,
Thy path unsullied light.
When Thou arisest, Lord,
What shall Thy work withstand?
When all Thy children want Thou giv'st,
Who, who shall stay Thy hand?"

Our picture shows us the Child Jesus on Its flight to Egypt. Joseph is in the lead. He has his ax upon his shoulder, so that, should it prove necessary, he may work at his trade down in Egypt, and, as a carpenter, earn his daily

bread. With his own tools a mechanic can work to the best advantage. That is why Joseph is taking his own ax with him. As you will have noticed, Joseph is using his right hand to lead the donkey, so that it may not jump to the side and throw off its load. Upon the donkey Mary is seated, and in her arms she embraces the Child Jesus. Joseph looks as if he were strong enough to defend the mother and her Child. And yet, Joseph would have been unable to shield them, if, for instance, Herod had taken it into his head to send a troup of soldiers after them to slay the Child. No, God took the shielding of the Child into His own hands, and sent His angel to protect the Child Jesus on Its way. This the artist wishes to show in the picture by having an angel represented as the guide and protector of the holy family on its flight. But whoever is under the protection of God and His angels, has nothing to fear. As the Psalmist expresses it, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and will say to the Lord, 'Thou art my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I will trust!'" Under the protection of God and His angel the Child Jesus indeed reached Egypt in safety, so that Joseph and Mary might have said, in the words of the Catechism, "I believe that God protects me against all danger, and guards and keeps me from all evil." Nor did God forsake them during their sojourn in Egypt, but graciously provided for them, so that they did not suffer any want. And when Herod had died, He again sent His angel and had him say to Joseph, "Arise and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead that sought the young Child's life." So Joseph again packed what few things he had with him, got the donkey out of the stable, set Mary and the Child upon it, and returned to the Jewish land. He would have preferred to go to Bethlehem, where he had lived since the birth of the Child. But having heard that Archelaus had become king in the

place of his father Herod, and now ruled in Judaea, Joseph was afraid that the son might be the father's equal in cruelty, and for this reason he did not take up his abode in Bethlehem, but went up to Nazareth in Galilee, Mary's former home. It was the hand of God which ordered this so; for the prophets had foretold that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5, 1), but that He would grow up in Galilee (Isaiah 9, 1) and there do the major part of His work as Savior.

There is just one thing in our story which may have set you to wondering. You would like to know why God did not prevent the killing of so many innocent children there in Bethlehem. You ask, "Could not God have prevented that terrible massacre, since the destiny of the world is in His hands, and He knows how to regulate everything so well?" In reply it must be said that God, being almighty, would have been quite able to save the Child Jesus without, at the same time, allowing other children to suffer the violent death that Herod had originally intended only for the newborn King. Why, then, did He not do it? For a full answer to this question we shall have to wait until we are with God in heaven, and he Himself explains to us this and many other riddles of His world dominion. But a few things may be said that will help us understand somewhat why the Bethlehemitic massacre was not prevented in connection with the wonderful rescue of the Child Jesus. So I would have you remember the following points, children:

1. The Child Jesus was best shielded if Herod believed It to be dead. Had he known that It was alive, he would have found ways and means to kill It even in Egypt. The life of the Child Jesus, however, was worth more than the whole world. In order that this Child's life might be spared, forty or fifty other children could well afford to give up their lives. If the grieved parents of these children, when at a later time they saw Jesus active as the Savior, learned to understand that Jesus is worth more than all the children

on earth, they no doubt ceased accusing God because He had permitted their children to suffer a violent death, in order to render the life of the Child Jesus entirely secure from any further murderous attempts on the part of Herod.

2. The measure of Herod's sin and cruelty was to be filled to the utmost and made manifest before the eyes of the whole people. Since Herod had already completely surrendered himself to sin and the devil, God permitted him, by the Bethlehemitic massacre of little children, to fill the measure of his sin and guilt to its utmost capacity, and thus to make his own damnation all the greater, while the Jews, seeing the awful power of sin exemplified in King Herod, were to be filled with a so much greater longing for the coming of the Savior, whom they could expect to make an end of the reign of sin, and as the true King to rule over His people Israel.

3. We may rest assured that God took those innocent children of Bethlehem to Himself in heaven, where their souls were in his presence, and happier than they ever could have become here on earth. Today, if Christian children are permitted to die at a tender age, we comfort ourselves by singing:

"When children, young and tender,
Their infant souls surrender
And leave this earthly life,
No cause have we for weeping,
They are in God's own keeping,
Aloof from every pain and strife."

How much more was this true of those children in Bethlehem! As painful as their death had been, so great and even greater was their joy when they awoke and found themselves in heaven, with their true Father. There, as we have reason to believe, they thanked God for having been privileged to die, in order that the Child Jesus might be spared. They could have accomplished nothing greater here on earth, even if they had lived to a ripe old age.

4. Finally we must not forget how severely God punished Herod for his cruelty. He thought that, having slain the new-born King, he would henceforth have peace of mind. But in this he was badly mistaken. Instead of being inwardly at rest, he became filled with the most violent fear, which disturbed his peace of mind day and night. His bad conscious troubled him without ceasing. When he wanted to go to sleep, then suddenly the mothers of those poor murdered children arose before his mental vision, and, pointing the finger at him, seemed to say to him, "Thou, thou art the murderer!" To this mental suffering was added a terrible bodily affliction. Herod was stricken with a most loathsome disease. A man who wrote on the life and reign of Herod about sixty years later, left the following historical record of his declining days: "Soon after the murdering of the children Herod was taken sick in the most terrible manner. His whole body was covered with itching sores, his intestines decayed and worms were generated in them, his feet became swollen and began to ulcerate, the members of his body grew lame and crooked, his breath short and repulsive because of its bad odor. He attenmpted to kill himself with a knife, but was hindered in the attempt, and so he died suffering the most terrible pain." Thus the wicked are utterly consumed with terrors, but to His own the Lord lends protection far above anything they may ask or think. Either He takes them unto Himself in heaven, as He did the children of Bethlehem, or He rescues them from danger and spares them for a rich and blessed life-work. Whether it be the former or the latter, in His hands we are always well taken care of. Therefore, children, commit your ways unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and rest assured that it will be for your good. For He has ever done all things well. You may not always be able to understand why in one case He has this and in the other that way of dealing with you; but rest assured, everything will turn out right in the end, and "all's well that ends well."

9. How the Child Jesus, When Twelve Years Old, Came to Visit the Temple.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem but grew up in Nazareth. Bethlehem should be thought of as a little town in Judaea, the southern part of the Holy Land, while Nazareth was located in Galilee, the northern section of Palestine. Between Judaea and Galilee we should look for Samaria. A fourth division of the Holy Land was located east of the Jordan River. Judaea, Samaria and Galilee, together with the province east of the Jordan, constituted the different divisions of Palestine at the time when Jesus sojourned here on earth (map!). Galilee was much more beautiful than Judaea. Numerous chains of hills extend from east to west, and in between them lie valleys as beautiful as they are fertile. The little town of Nazareth presents an especially beautiful sight. It is situated high up in the mountains and marks a point from which one can look far into the distance and view the country round about in all directions. Toward the west one has an outlook way to the Mediteranean Sea; toward the north, up to Mount Lebanon and Mount Hermon; toward the east, across to the round summit of Mount Tabor, formerly the sight of a strong fortress; and toward the south, down into the plain of Jezreel and beyond it to the ridge of Mount Carmel. Even in very ancient times there were two great mercantile highways which led right past Nazareth, and upon which one could see merchants from all lands traveling either across to the Mediterranean Sea, or over to the Euphrates River, or down through Samaria to Jerusalem. The town itself is hidden from the eyes of those who approach it; for Nazareth is encircled by fig-trees, olive-trees, large cactus plants, with their sharp thorns, harvest fields and orchards, the circle being so dense as to hide the town completely. But having passed through this circle of vegetation, one is suddenly confronted by the little city lying there

before his wondering eyes, like a pearl after one has broken the shell that holds it enclosed. Below the town, in a valley bottom, from which one ascends the hill-side up to the town, there is an unusually large spring out of which water in abundance bubbles forth; toward evening the women of the city go down, and, in large jars, get their supply of fresh spring-water. We surely can understand why Nazareth has been called "the flower of Galilee". Here, then, the Child Jesus grew up into boyhood, and developed into a youth, working as such until He was a man of thirty years. This has endeared the little town of Nazareth to us Christians in a peculiar way. The Bible tells us very little about the life of Jesus during the time that intervened between His return from Egypt to Nazareth and the beginning of His public ministry when He had reached His thirtieth year. In fact, but one of the many Jesus-stories is taken from that period of His life. Much as we would like to know a great deal more about that part of the Savior's earthly career, it can not be regarded as necessary for us to know any more concerning it, since God has not caused more to be preserved to us. The one and only story that we have relative to the more mature childhood of Jesus, is, indeed, so beautiful that we can afford to content ourselves with it. Today we shall hear it related; for I must tell you **how the Child Jesus, when twelve years old, came to visit the temple.**

I stated that we only had one story about the more mature childhood of Jesus, and this is true. However, the Bible does contain, in addition to the story we have in mind, a short statement which sheds a brilliant light upon that whole period of the Savior's life-history. This statement reads as follows: "The Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him." Precious words, these! They show us how seriously the Son of God took His incarnation. He did not merely assume a human form when He was born in Bethlehem,

so that, although He appeared as a human being, He would not have been really human at all. No, although He was, and always remained, the Son of God, He nevertheless became true man, like all others who are born of a human mother, except that He was without sin, and in every way lived a genuinely human life. He grew, not only in body, but also in soul, or spirit. Like other children, He lay upon His mother's lap, not knowing anything of Himself and the world which He had entered, only gradually awakening out of the dormant life of the first infancy to a state of real consciousness, when He would take notice of things round about Him. In a truly human way the powers of His mind developed from one stage of development to another, much as a flower gradually unfolds its petals when exposed to the warm rays of the sun. The Child Jesus was not able, right from the start of His earthly life, to read, to write, or to work arithmetic, nor did He learn to do these things in but a moment's time. It was not at a single bound that He gained His knowledge of the beautiful Bible verses and the charming Bible stories. He had to study these things, just as you do, and learn them gradually, step by step, even though it may have been less hard for Him, and more like play. In Nazareth there was no school for children, but only one for grown people. His mother took the place of a teacher. She taught Him reading, writing and arithmetic. From her lips He first heard the beautiful Bible verses and stories. Mary must have taken pleasure in teaching the Child Jesus, not only because she liked to do her duty as a mother, but also because it really was a joy to teach such a Child, since He looked at her so attentively with His bright eyes and lent His ears so eagerly to every word that came from her lips, gave her such correct answers and asked her such intelligent questions. All this, however, was so very wonderful, such a manifestation of God's grace to man, that we shall not be able even when we are in heaven

to understand more than the least bit of the great mystery that the Child Jesus was true God, who knows and is able to do all things, and yet also true Man, studying like any other child, and only by degrees increasing in wisdom. It always reminds me of the words of a hymn, in which the poet confesses:

"When I this wonder contemplate,
My spirit can not grasp its weight;
It worships God who reigns above,
And glories in His boundless love."

For, let us not overlook this, out of love, out of love toward us, the only begotten Son of God so humbled Himself as to become true man and there in Nazareth to spend the days of His youth after the manner of a genuinely human being, made like unto us in all things, yet without sin; this was indeed a part of the Savior's task, for the accomplishment of which He had come into the world.

In the statement from the Bible concerning which we said that like a brilliant light it illuminated the whole youth of Jesus, it is also remarked that "the grace of God was upon Him", which means that God was well pleased in Him, that there was nothing in heaven and on earth upon which He looked with such complete approval as upon the Child Jesus in Nazareth. And why this approval? Because the Child Jesus was devout and good, chaste and beautiful, like a flower that has just unfolded and upon which not a speck of dust has yet settled. When father and mother prayed, He, the Child Jesus, folded His little hands and thought of the dear God in heaven. He did not have to be told this, but did it of His own accord. He played with the children in the neighborhood, as well as with other children in the little city, and all were glad when He came to take part in their games. The Child Jesus also remained good when It came to be larger. He obeyed His parents without wait-

ing to be told the same thing twice. Whatever His foster-father demanded of Him, that He did at once, and He did it so well that Joseph could fully depend upon Him to do a thing in the right way. To His mother Mary He was equally obedient, and since He loved her from His heart, He often did things just to please her, without having been told to do them. A look of approval from her eyes was His reward, and made His heart leap for joy. Joseph, as you know, was a carpenter, and we can well imagine how the Child Jesus used to gather up the chips and carry them into the woodshed, or how He would take His foster-father's dinner to him when he worked away from home. As for His mother, He most likely helped her in the garden, got water for her down at the spring, or filled the woodbox for her every evening. He never complained of having to do too much. He did not think Himself too good to perform even the most common sort of work. So when you children help your father and mother with their work, you may say to yourselves, "Our Savior also did things for His parents, and nothing was too much or too menial for Him." There was only **one thing** that the Child Jesus could not bear to see; it made Him turn away when people showed themselves mean and sinned against God. The first time He heard one of His playmates tell a lie, it made Him feel so bad that He must have run home and buried His face in His mother's lap and told her with tears in His eyes that a certain boy had so far forgotten God as not to speak the truth. How anyone could be so bad as to sin against the good Father in heaven, was more than His pure soul found itself able to understand. For this reason, above all others, the grace of God was upon Him and His heavenly Father regarded Him with such unalloyed joy.

When his foster-father Joseph happened to have a little spare time, he took Him along for a walk and showed Him the surroundings of Nazareth. He told Him all about the

great Sea which they could see glistening far toward the west, and upon which large ships sailed, carrying goods from one country to another. Taking Him out to one of the great mercantile highways, he showed Him one of those long trains of merchants, seated on camels and bound for the great river Euphrates, on the banks of which Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, to whom Jesus belonged, had lived before he, in obedience to God's command, came to the land of Canaan. He let Him look toward the south where, on the plain of Jezreel, the fathers of the Jewish nation had fought such great battles, and across to Mount Carmel, where centuries ago the mighty prophet Elijah brought the children of Israel back from the false worship of Baal to the worship of the true and living God. Then, having returned from such an outing, the Child Jesus would have His mother read those stories to Him from the Bible, and later He read them Himself. In this way He learned to love the Bible more and more; with ever increasing clearness He heard in it the voice of His heavenly Father. When on each Saturday of the week the Jewish Sabbath made its appearance, everything was quiet, and deep stillness reigned in Nazareth; for that was the day of rest for the Israelites, who did not observe Sunday, as we do, but the Sabbath, which came on Saturday. It was kept very strictly. On that day the people of Nazareth went to church, as we would express it. The building which they visited was, however, not a real church, but a school for grown-up people. They called it a synagogue. There it was that the people came together and had divine services. They confessed their faith in the living God, as we confess the three articles of the Apostles' Creed; they offered prayer to God much as we are wont to do; they had the Bible read and explained to them; they also sang hymns, most of which were taken from the book of psalms, so well known to us. Joseph and Mary went to the synagogue regularly on the Sabbath, and the Child Jesus went with them.

How quiet He was, and how He listened to every word! Again it was the voice of His heavenly Father that He heard. With Him He spoke in prayer, and there was nothing that He would rather have done than thus to commune with His Father in heaven.

If the people in Nazareth wanted to attend a real church, they had to walk a very, very long distance; for in the whole Jewish land there was but one real church. As you older pupils know, it was the temple at Jerusalem. While the people also prayed in the temple, while in the halls surrounding the temple the Old Testament was read and explained, while there was provision made for the singing of psalms, some of them hymns of thanksgiving and others such as gave expression to sorrow for sin and the longing to obtain forgiveness, the chief thing in the temple was that the priests there offered sacrifices, partly to secure God's pardon for sin, partly to thank Him for His manifold blessings. God Himself had so ordered it, and it was His will that sacrifices should be made only in the temple at Jerusalem. For this reason there was only one temple in the entire Jewish land. Several days were needed to make the journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem, and it stands to reason that the people of Nazareth could not visit the temple very often. However, the devout among them undertook the long journey to Jerusalem, and visited the temple, at least once every year, God Himself having expressly demanded this of all the men in Israel. Most of them chose the Jewish Easter festival for that purpose. Joseph was one of these men who when Easter drew near would start out for Jerusalem. Every year he went to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover or Jewish Easter festival, and whenever it was possible for her to do so, Mary went with him. The Child Jesus had to stay at home, because the way was too long for him and in the temple there was not enough room for so many little children. But it was always a special treat for Him when His parents returned from Jerusalem

and told Him all about what they had seen and heard in the holy city and its beautiful temple. His mother was especially good at relating what interested her Son. When she spoke to him of Jerusalem, that city fair and high, glistening in the light of the sun; of the temple with its golden roof, white marble walls, and three divisions, the Court Yard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place; of the priests vested in splendid robes, and the learned teachers who read from the Scriptures and explained what they had read to the people, —then the eyes of the Child Jesus fairly beamed for joy, and nestling up to His mother He would say, "Dear mother, when may I go with you to Jerusalem and visit the temple?" She would answer, "When Thou art twelve years old, not before." Boys who had reached their twelfth year were not only permitted, but even required to accompany their parents to Jerusalem incidental to the great festivals. But they were not allowed to go there any sooner. It was something like our own custom, according to which you must have been confirmed before you are permitted to go to the Lord's Supper with the adult members of the church.

At last the Child Jesus had reached Its twelfth year. At that age, boys in the Holy Land are about as large and strong as our own boys are at sixteen or seventeen, because in the warm climate they grow and develop just so much more quickly. At the age of twelve the Child Jesus became a "son of the law", as the Jews expressed it; that is, those rules of the law that were intended to be kept by all men in Israel, were from now on also to be observed by Him. If He had become twelve years old in December, He probably counted the weeks and days that separated Him from Easter, and thus from His journey to Jerusalem, just as you count the weeks and days before Christmas, or before your summer vacation, and can hardly wait until it makes its appearance. But finally the day arrived when the Child Jesus, with His parents and other people of Nazareth, was to start out for

Jerusalem. The wealthy ones made the journey on camels and asses, while the poor, taking with them a supply of food, traveled on foot. Joseph and Mary, as we know, belonged to the latter class. I imagine that the Child Jesus was glad He could walk instead of riding. For when one undertakes a journey on foot, he can see everything so much better. And there was so much to be seen on the way to Jerusalem. The nearest way from Nazareth to the holy city was the one that led through Shechem and Bethel; but Joseph most likely did not choose this route. You see, it would have taken him through Samaria, and the Jews did not like to come in contact with the Samaritans. For this reason they avoided passing through the land of these people, preferring to reach Jerusalem in rather a round about way. Joseph very likely did the same thing. Together with Mary, the Child Jesus, and other people from Nazareth, he started out on the way that led down to the Jordan River. In all the cities and villages through which they had to pass new groups of people joined them. When they had reached Lake Gennesaret, they descended to the low valley of the Jordan, crossed the swiftly flowing stream, ascended the heights on the other side of the river and traveled through the fertile land east of the Jordan (map!), always in a southern direction, until they were opposite the city of Jericho. Here they again crossed the Jordan, thus returning to the country west of that river. It was a beautiful way. They took their time in traveling it and frequently sat down to rest. When we travel in company with others, the way does not seem long at any rate. At times they brightened their journey by singing a song, and there were in the Old Testament one hundred and fifty psalms, so that they had a rich collection from which they could make their choice. Many of those beautiful psalms they knew by heart. On that particular journey they were especially fond of singing psalms 120—134. We can imagine how the Child Jesus joined in the singing of these psalms. Under

the palm trees of Jericho they were apt to take an extra long rest, because the shade of the trees was especially enjoyable after they had walked in the hot sun for a good while. From Jericho they had to travel uphill most of the time. Their way led through Bethany, and then up to the Mount of Olives. Having arrived at its summit, they suddenly beheld the city of Jerusalem. There it was, directly opposite them; they were separated from it only by the valley of the Kidron. It was an altogether overwhelming sight. How high it appeared with its Mount Zion, its castle of David, and its temple! How the pinnacle of the temple glistened in the rays of the sun! "So here is the place where David had his throne, and where Solomon ruled over Israel!" thought the Child Jesus. "Here is the temple, the house of God, the sanctuary where offerings are made to His holy name, the most holy spot in the whole land, chosen and dedicated by God Himself as a place where His honor dwelleth", such were the thoughts that stirred His soul to its very depths. After He had walked down the Mount of Olives with His parents, crossed the Kidron and then ascended to the city on the other side of this brook, He probably would have preferred to go to the temple that very evening. But He could not follow His inclinations. He had to stay with His parents, and they went to the house of a friend, where they wanted to spend the night, and also the following days; for the Jewish Easter festival lasted fully eight days, and whoever found it possible staid in Jerusalem until all the festal days had come and gone.

In the morning of the first day that they spent in Jerusalem the Child Jesus could accompany His parents to the temple. His heart leaped for joy as He, together with them, walked up the temple-hill and the whole beautiful building, which the wicked King Herod, in order to win the favor of the Jews, had caused to be almost entirely rebuilt, until it excelled in beauty and splendor the one erected by Solomon,

became immediately exposed to His view. In a spirit of awe and reverence He crossed the threshold of the door which led to the Court Yards by which the temple proper was surrounded on all sides. They consisted of large halls offering room for hundreds and thousands of people. With His parents He probably wended His way to the hall where the people used to gather for morning prayer, while the priest went into the Holy Place and there offered up incense. Just as the priest took red-hot coals and strewd incense upon them, so that it ignited and clouds of vapor, emitting a most agreeable odor, arose from the censer, so the prayers of God's devout peole were to rise to His throne and find favor with Him. Here the Child Jesus was in His element, for who would not like to speak with the heavenly Father in a spirit of true devotion? Just as little as man can live without breathing, just so little could the Child Jesus get along without praying. His soul craved communion with God in prayer. From a distance He also saw the altar in the Court of the priests (plan of the temple!), and when the priests placed the animal for the sacrifice upon the altar and burnt it in its entirety, He most likely said to God, "Thus will I offer myself to Thee entirely and do nothing but that which is in accord with Thy will." Then, too, His parents took Him along into those halls where the scribes, the learned teachers of the law, were seated, and where they read and explained the Bible, that is, the Old Testament, to the people. This reading and explaining of the Bible interested Him most intensely. Every word form the Bible was to Him like a sound from His heavenly home. There He sat down quietly and modestly, as was proper for boys of His age, but He paid very close attention to what the teachers were saying, so that not a single word might be overheard by Him. And He felt quite sorry when a few hours later His parents took Him along to the house of the friendly host with whom they were staying while the festival was in progress. However, He knew that the Easter festival was going

to last for a whole week, and so comforted Himself with the thought of being able to return to those teachers in the temple, so that He might go there at any time, even without being escorted by His parents.

And sure enough, hardly had the temple been opened on the following day, when the Child Jesus made His appearance there and hastily walked into the halls where He could listen to those teachers of the Bible. This He kept up during all the eight days of the festival. The other boys who had come with Him down from Nazareth may have walked through the different streets of the city, watched the people buy and sell goods in the public market place, climbed to the top of the castle of David, visited the proud mansion once occupied by King Herod, or watched the Roman soldiers with helmets on their heads and spears in their hands, a sight entirely new to them; but the Child Jesus had something more important to do, He simply could not refrain from going to the temple and listening to the voice of His heavenly Father. Thursday evening of that Easter-week must have been of special importance to Him: for on that evening the paschal lamb was slain, from which the Jewish Easter festival had derived its name (Passover). Either Joseph or the man with whom he was staying took a lamb one year old and without a blemish, and brought it into the Court Yard of the temple. Here it was slain and its blood sprinkled on the altar, the flesh of the lamb, however, was taken home, were, instead of cutting it into small pieces, they held it over the fire by means of a spear, and roasted it until it was well done. Then the host, his family, Joseph and Mary, together with the Child Jesus, took their places at the table, in order to eat the paschal lamb. The yougest one among them, perhaps Jesus himself, asked the question, "Why is the lamb slain, its blood sprinkled on the altar, and its flesh eaten in such a solemn manner?" To this question the host made the following reply: "This is done in remembrance of our deliverance from Egypt.

When our fathers were held as slaves down in Egypt and the cruel king did not want to allow them to leave that country, God in one night killed all the firstborn in Egypt, both among men and animals, but to our fathers He said, 'Let each house-father slay a lamb and with its blood paint both the posts and the upper sill of the door of his house; then no one among you shall die, and you shall eat the lamb in peace, resting assured that you will be set free.' Our fathers did as they were told, and, as a consequence, were spared, the angel of death passing them over when he went forth that night to slay all the firstborn among the Egyptians. That very night they were given permission to leave the land of their bondage. In order that we may never forget this great act of God's mercy, we have this yearly festival of Easter (Passover), and do with the paschal lamb what our fathers did with it in Egypt. This is the reason we are having this Easter celebration today." Thus spoke the host. His words, as well as the whole festival supper, which the Child Jesus was attending for the first time, made a deep impression upon Him. Many other questions may have been asked by Him on that note-worthy occasion. He wanted to know why the blood was sprinkled on the altar, whether forgiveness of sin could really be obtained thereby, etc. For this reason He was up early the next morning, went to the temple and looked up the learned teachers of the Bible, so that they might answer those and similar questions for Him. The scribes, in turn, soon began to take notice of Him and were all agreed that they had never had such a pupil. They called Him and took Him right into their midst. Our picture shows Him to us as He stands there among the learned teachers of the law and asks them questions. One of the teachers has a Bible before him, another Bible is lying on the desk, right in front of the Child Jesus, a third one is seen on the floor, and beside it there is a role, which most likely contains some of the Old Testament Scriptures. The teachers are not young any more, some of

them already having gray hair. But they are all amazed at the answers that He gives and the questions that He asks them. One can see how they are leaning forward, so as to catch every word of His questions and answers. What may have surprised them most was that most of His questions had reference to the Savior who was to come into the world. When such questions were being discussed, the eyes of Jesus shone with extraordinary brilliancy, and the scribes may not have been able to answer all of His many questions. Jesus Himself was so much taken up with these talks about the Savior that it made Him forget everything else. The strange city quickly became His home because it contained the temple, where He heard the voice of His heavenly Father. He became so attached to the temple, and so absorbed in the things He heard there, that He did not notice it when on the seventh day of the festival his comrades from Nazareth started out on their way home. Nor did He become aware of the fact that His parents were also leaving Jerusalem, together with others who like them hailed from Nazareth and other cities in Galilee. To the Child Jesus, more than to any one else, could be applied the words of the Psalmist, "Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honor dwelleth." Jesus there experienced the truth of His own later words, "Blessed are they that hear God's word and keep it." For hearing God's word and pondering it in His heart, made Him happy and blessed indeed.

His parents were not worried about Him when they left Jerusalem, because they felt sure that in the evening they would find Him among His comrades. It should be remembered, too, that He really was not a child any more, and that He had never given His parents cause for being anxious on His account. But how they became frightened when evening came and they did not find Him in the place where the people hailing from Nazareth were going to pass the night! They asked everybody, but no one had seen the Child Jesus,

no one knew anything about Him. So they concluded that He must have staid in Jerusalem. Since the darkness of night was upon them, they could not return to Jerusalem at once; but the next morning they were on their way bright and early. Mary, in particular, felt her heart beating violently. She perhaps said to herself, "I should have watched Him more closely; if anything should have happened to Him, I would be to blame." She recalled in what a wonderful way God had given her the Child, and how He was to become the Savior; and here she had lost Him! When Mary and Joseph arrived in Jerusalem, they first went to the house where they had staid during the Easter festival. But they did not find Him there. And now they began a long search for their Child. They searched for Him in the morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening, but all their searching proved in vain. Then followed a restless night, in which they probably did not sleep a wink, their great anxiety kept them awake. Where were they to look for Him when the next day dawned? They had sought Him everywhere and seen no trace of Him. Besides, Jerusalem was a large city, much larger than Dubuque; but news papers were not known there at the time and no announcement concerning a lost child could be published in them; there was no hotel in which every one who wishes to stay over night must register his name in a book; there was no police station where one could have made inquiries about the lost Child Jesus; all this made it exceedingly hard to find Him. At last the thought came to Mary, "Our Child must be in the temple". And she said to Joseph, "Come, let us go to the temple; may-be He is there." It was their last hope.

And, behold, when they came to the temple, they found the Child Jesus. Very likely He had spent the last two nights in one of the halls that surrounded the temple, and was not yet fully aware of the fact that the festival was over, that His parents had left the city and were in a state

of anxiety on His account. Again He was right in the midst of the teachers, to hear more of God's word and to increase His understanding of the Scriptures. He had discovered that to His soul the word of God was nourishing food, water from a heavenly fountain, and He just could not get enough of it. Mary and Joseph were amazed when they saw Him there. What was the Child doing among these distinguished teachers to whom every Jew looked up with a sense of reverence? How did their Son, who had grown up under such simple and lowly conditions, suddenly come to move about among the learned doctors of the law as if He had been used to such surroundings form early infancy? They really did not know what to make of the situation. For a few moments they were quite speechless. But Mary then beckoned Him to come to her, and said to Him, "My Son, why hast Thou dealt thus with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing!" It was her maternal heart that prompted her to give utterance to these words, a heart that had for days been agitated by the gravest care and anxiety. No doubt, she spoke these words in the kindliest tone of voice; for she was so glad to think that she had her Son back again. Nevertheless her words contained an intimation as if Jesus, in a way, had been at fault. Mary wanted to say, "How couldst Thou cause us all this pain and worriment?" Then, by emphatically using the expression "thy father", she showed that in her opinion Jesus had neglected to fulfill His duty to His foster-father Joseph. But if Mary by her question plainly gave expression to her surprise in view of her Son's behavior, which seemed to her as being out of harmony with His usual flawless conduct, Jesus must have been equally surprised to hear that question from His mother's lips. He was not aware of having committed even the slightest wrong. He had only given way to the sincere longing of His pure heart for Him who was His Father indeed, and to whom He was altogether differently related than to His foster-

father Joseph. If for a brief moment He had dropped the hand of His foster-father, He had not done it in order to be free and live according to His own will and pleasure, but only to grasp the hand of His heavenly Father so much more firmly. He felt that naturally He had to conduct Himself in this, and not in any other, way. For this reason He replied in child-like simplicity, "How is it that you sought Me? Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" This is what He meant to say: "You know that God is My Father, and that the temple is My Father's house; the Son, however, belongs where His Father is and where He hears His Father's voice." It was the first time, as we may assume, that mother and Son no longer understood each other. The mother lays to His discredit what the Son has done as something quite in harmony with His true nature. I am not able to say whether, while in the temple at Jerusalem, Jesus for the first time became humanly conscious of God's being His Father in a different way than He is the Father of anyone else, or whether He had been conscious of this fact at an earlier date. But here He **expressed** this wonderful consciousness for the first time, and the light of the heavenly world which shown forth from His words was so great as to dazzle His mother, so that even she was no longer quite able to understand Him. However, though she had to close her eyes to the brightness of the splendor that radiated from His remarkable words, she nevertheless kept them and pondered them in her heart. And we, children, shall also take this to heart: In the temple at Jerusalem Jesus called God His Father and Himself God's Son. Henceforth, whatever we may hear of Him is to be understood by us as a report of the Son of God who became true man, so that even now we may feel free to confess, "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord and Savior."

But what now became of the Child Jesus? Did He henceforth want to stay in His Father's house? Did He refuse to leave the temple and return to Nazareth with His earthly mother and His foster-father? Did He say to Mary anything like this: "I am too good to go back to Nazareth and continue to live there in poverty and humility?" No, He said nothing of the kind. He knew that Mary was His mother, and He had learned the Fourth Commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother." So He went down to Nazareth with His parents, and was subject unto them. He obeyed them just the same as heretofore. In proportion to the rate at which His age and strength increased, He even rendered a greater amount of service to His mother and also increasingly diminished the burden of His foster-father by assisting him in his work as a carpenter and as bread-winner of the family. Thus for an additional eighteen years He was subject to His parents. He did not think or say, "I am called to something higher, and it is not worthy of Me to be the assistant of a carpenter, since I am to be the Savior of men". That He was to be the Savior of men, He never forgot; but in this capacity He did not want to labor until His Father in heaven should inform Him that the time for beginning His work as Savior had come. Up to that time He did not desire to prove His being the Son of God in any other way than by prompt obedience to His parents.

O children, both large and small, come to the Savior, and learn of Him. Nowhere is He more lovely to behold than in the temple. There His heavenly Father speaks with Him and He with His heavenly Father. There, as in His true home, He realizes that He is God's Son, yet He goes with His parents and is subject unto them. It is to be the same with you. For then, and only then, will God be well pleased in you, as He was in the Child Jesus. Like Him, you must feel most at home where you hear the word and voice of the heavenly Father, and nothing must be more noticeable in

you than that you obey your parents. Is this, however, really the case with you? Can your Sunday school teachers say of you that you like to be in the house of God? And your parents, are they able to commend you for your obedience to them? Let us pray that they may be in a position to do so more and more. Yes, let us pray even now:

A model shalt Thou be
Throughout my life for me,
O Lord Jesus!
Help me, I pray,
God's child to stay,
To do His will and keep His way.

10. How Jesus, at the Wedding at Cana, Changed Water Into Wine.

The last time we left Jesus right after He, at the age of twelve years, had returned from the temple in Jerusalem to Nazareth, His Galilean home. Today we meet Him as a man thirty years old. About the eighteen years that intervened the Bible tells us nothing. He spent them in the quiet of His parents' home, keeping the fourth commandment as it never was kept before or since that time. He was the Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity, yet now He lived as one who had become true man, amid poor and lowly surroundings, rendering obedience to His foster-father Joseph and His human mother, who was not exempt from faults and shortcomings. From His father He learned the trade of a carpenter or builder, and followed it under his supervision. Joseph seems to have died rather soon, the Bible telling us nothing more of him. If we are right in making this inference, we may further assume that Jesus afterwards carried on the business independently Although He was now His own master and had to provide for His mother. He

still led a very modest and simple life. Was He not called to be something higher than a builder and repairer of houses? Had not the angel said, both before and after His birth, that He was the promised Savior, destined to lead men back to God and make them happy in the communion of the heavenly Father? Had not He Himself declared there in the temple that God was His Father in a very special sense of the word? Yes, children, all that is true and was to be fulfilled, but not until God's own time and hour had come. And just this is so great in Jesus that He did not try to push Himself to the front, but waited for God's beck and call. For us ordinary folk it is a pretty hard thing to wait, and especially is this true of children, who often grow restless when they are asked to wait a while, for instance, until mother has finished trimming the beautiful Christmas tree. Jesus could wait, knowing that the time would come when His heavenly Father would tell Him to begin His work as Savior. The time did come. Down in Judaea, at the Jordan River, John the Baptist began to preach and to baptize when Jesus was about twenty nine years old. Soon people heard of it throughout the Jewish land, reports of John's activity even reaching the distant city of Nazareth. Those who had been in Jerusalem to attend some great Jewish festival brought back with them the news of that peculiar man, who lived in the wilderness, wore a coat made of camels' hair, and ate locusts and wild honey. One thing these devout people had especially remembered, and it gave them much food for thought. John had said in his sermon, "The kingdom of heaven is near at hand; soon He will come whose shoe-latchets I am not worthy to loosen. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." This they could not but take to mean that the Savior would soon come and begin His work of rescue. Among those who heard of John's preaching was Jesus, the quiet carpenter in Nazareth, and He understood John's message better than any of the others. He knew that John was speaking of Him; for

He was the Savior who was now to appear in public and begin His rescuing work. May-be the heavenly Father also told Him inwardly that the time for His public ministry had arrived. Whatever may have prompted Him, Jesus suddenly gave up His trade, went down to Judaea, along with many others, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. He had then reached His thirtieth year. The older ones among you still remember from last year that when Jesus received baptism at the hands of John the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit came down upon Him under the sign of a dove, while the voice of the heavenly Father declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This shows that it was in accordance with the will of the heavenly Father for Jesus to begin His work as Savior. As the older ones among you must also recall, the devil soon afterwards tried to dissuade Jesus from becoming the Savior, but Jesus remained firm and finally said to the tempter, "Get thee hence, Satan!" After that, it happened that John the Baptist, when Jesus was passing by, pointed Him out and said to those who were with Him, "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And now Jesus began His work as Savior by calling a number of men who believed in Him as the Savior and constantly staid with Him. I dare say you will find it easy to recall the names of the first six of His disciples; they were: James*, John, Andrew, Peter, Philipp and Nathanael. With these six disciples (later there were six more, making the total number twelve) Jesus now traveled through the whole Jewish land, from place to place, from city to city, and everywhere He preached to the people concerning His heavenly Father, and by His words as well as by His deeds it was made plain to them that He was the Savior who was to come into

* James is indeed not expressly mentioned; however, the version *πρῶτος* in John 1, 41 (this one, being the first, findeth his brother Simon) leads us to think of him.

the world. Those journeys through the Holy Land were very precious to the disciples of Jesus; they still remembered them most vividly when they had grown old and gray, and the time of their departure was drawing near. A part of what the disciples saw and heard on those wonderful journeys was written down by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and thus transmitted to us. We find it recorded in the four Gospels, which were written by them, and which make up the first four books of the New Testament. Taking these Gospels for a guide, shall we not in spirit follow Jesus on His journeys through the Holy Land, so that we may also come to know the Savior, learn to believe in Him with ever increasing firmness, and thereby be made to feel most happy? Yes, children let us resolve to do this on the present and the following Sundays. The disciples of Jesus went with Him, "so let us also go"; and may God give you willing eyes and hearts, so that on these journeys with Jesus He may become increasingly great to you, and that you may see His glory with ever growing clearness. Today we are going to begin these blessed wanderings with Jesus. **Let us go with Jesus to the wedding at Cana and see how He revealed His glory as Savior by changing water into wine.**

We want to accompany Jesus to a wedding. Some of you may have been at a wedding or watched a wedding party from a distance, so that you have an idea as to how a wedding is conducted here in our own midst. I regret to say that many bridal couples are no longer being married in church. They have the pastor come to the house and solemnize their marriage, or go to the parsonage for that purpose. To be married in church, is much more solemn and beautiful. No other place is so appropriate for this important step in life. It should be taken with solemnity and amid sacred surroundings. When a couple comes to church to have its marriage solemnized, this is about what happens here among us: The bride, with two of her best friends, is taken to church in a suitable con-

veyance, and the bridegroom likewise with two of his best friends. These friends are taken along as witnesses of the marriage ceremony, and it is their privilege to rejoice with the bridal couple in a special way. The bride preferably wears a snow-white dress, as a symbol of purity, and a long veil, together with a myrtle wreath in her hair, is also a suitable part of her attire. The bridegroom often has a myrtle twig in the button-hole of his coat. Little girls walk ahead of the procession and strew flowers on the way, to indicate the wish that the bridal couple may be granted a pleasant journey through life. The church is usually decorated with flowers for the occasion. The organist begins to play a suitable march as soon as the bridal party crosses the threshold of the church-door. In solemn procession the young people march to the altar. The bride is led to the side of the bridegroom. The pastor stands at the altar facing the bridal couple. He reads from the Bible the words of God which point out to bride and bridegroom their respective rights and duties, as well as the promise of the divine blessing upon the state of marriage which they are about to enter. The contracting parties then join their right hands and promise that they will be mutually faithful throughout life. The pastor now offers prayer and pronounces the divine blessing, after which the bride and bridegroom, having become man and wife, turn about and walk out of the church, while the organ sends forth sounds that indicate both praise and prayer, praise in view of the divinely instituted order of marriage, prayer as an appeal to Jesus to go with the young married couple on their journey through life. The young married couple, in marching down the aisle, may fittingly repeat to themselves the words, "Jesus, still lead on, till our rest is won, and although the way be cheerless, we will follow calm and fearless; guide us by Thy hand to the Fatherland." Out in the entrance to the church proper, friends and acquaintances come up to the young couple to congratulate them and wish them God's bless-

ing. Then all return to the house in which the wedding takes place. It is usually the house of the bride. Here a wedding dinner is served. The young married couple and their attendants occupy the places of honor at the table. All who are in attendance at the wedding eat, converse, sing and play together. Everybody is in a happy frame of mind, and the festivities sometimes are continued way into the night.

I have thus tried to describe, in a brief way, how a wedding is conducted among us. The wedding to which we are going to follow Jesus today differed from those in our own coutry, owing to the circumstance that it was celebrated in the Orient; for in the far East people have their own peculiar customs, including those connected with marriage. It was a Jewish wedding, and it took place in Cana of Galilee, about an hour's walk northeast of Nazareth. The family in whose midst the wedding was held must have been intimately acquainted, with Mary, the mother of Jesus, in fact, Mary may have belonged to the relationship of the bridal couple. On entering the town, one could notice at once that something unusual was in progress, because one heard the sound of merry voices, shouting, laughing and singing. And, sure enough, at one end of the little town, out under the open sky, a happy group of people had come together to celebrate a wedding. They had set up a number of posts in such a way as to have them form a square. The posts were joined to each other by crossbeams. On these beams they laid the branches and twigs of trees, thus making a sort of roof to keep out the hot rays of the sun. The space between the posts was filled out with beautiful green garlands. The whole structure resembled a cozy arbor. Inside, the floors were covered with clean rugs, and along the sides there were cushions upon which the people were seated in a half-reclining posture, resting on one arm, and for this purpose comfortable rugs and cushions were provided. There were two apartments, one for the men and another for the women. Right on the

line of division there was a somewhat elevated platform upon which the bride and bridegroom had their seats. Young people, chiefly relatives of the bridegroom, walked to and fro. They had taken the place of servants, and it was for them to wait upon the guests. From the kitchen they brought in all kinds of good things to eat. They passed around figs as soft and juicy as pears, bunches of grapes, oranges, nuts, and the like. But they also filled large cups with wine and thus refreshed the guests with a most palatable drink. All these things were gotten in readiness by the ruler of the feast, who was also a friend of the bridegroom. For the seven days during which the wedding was in progress he relieved the bridegroom and his young wife from all irksome cares, so that they might indulge in unmixed joy and gladness. Among the guests was to be seen Mary, the mother of Jesus and the faithful friend of the family.

The wedding had already lasted a good while—although we can not tell just how long—when suddenly a number of new guests made their appearance. There were no less than seven of them. These new guests were Jesus and His six newly called disciples. For He had left Judaea and returned to Galilee, taking with Him those six men who from now on were to stay with Him constantly, namely, James and John, Peter and Andrew, Philipp and Nathanael. Very likely He had first taken them to Nazareth, and then gone with them to Cana, where the wedding was being celebrated. Whether Jesus had been invited to the wedding some time before or only heard on His return to Nazareth that it was taking place and that His mother had already gone there, whether He merely went to Cana because Nathanael was at home there and thus incidentally came to be invited to the wedding, that I am unable to say, nor is it of any importance. The chief thing is that Jesus was invited to attend the wedding. No doubt, the bridegroom knew Him and did not want the days of joy and festivity to pass by without adding Jesus to the number of his guests.

He had often before noticed that wherever Jesus appeared He brought with Him a special joy and blessing, and these he did not want to miss at his wedding. Since, however, Jesus was accompanied by six disciples, the bridegroom could not very well avoid extending an invitation to them also, and he did it cheerfully. He thought, "The more, the merrier;" besides, He had reason to believe that as long as Jesus had received these men into His company they might without any hesitation be made welcome at a marriage feast. So the wedding guests moved together somewhat more closely, and thus made room for the seven new arrivals.

With Jesus there, the wedding must have been doubly enjoyable. The people in Nazareth knew why they called Him "Friendliness"; they gave Him that name because He was so friendly toward them, taking part in their simple enjoyments and ever showing Himself a very present help in trouble. Jesus was all friendliness at the wedding in Cana, too, and a spirit of good will found expression in every feature of His countenance. He had a kind word for everyone, and addressed each one in such a way as to gladden his heart. It was perfectly natural that He should lead in the conversation, but He made no one feel oppressed, for all were only too glad to listen to Him. He could tell them such beautiful stories, and each story, simple though it was, taught them some important lesson and gave them food for thought. When the guests started to sing a song, to give vent to their joyful emotions, Jesus was glad to let His voice unite with theirs, and when the cup was passed around, He did not refuse to partake of their wine. When the first evening was ended, and when the wedding guests returned the next evening, to continue the festivities, according to the prevalent Jewish custom, we may be sure that not one of them was missing; for this was the happiest and purest wedding they had ever attended.

Thus several evenings had already been spent amid festal joy and healthful hilarity (for although a Jewish wedding

lasted a whole week, you must not imagine that the people staid together constantly and ate and drank for seven days in succession, because, after the first day was ended, only the evenings of the remaining six days were devoted to sociability). One evening, however, the spirit of joy was in danger of being greatly dampened. The ruler of the feast had secretly beckoned the bridegroom to come over to him, and, in a whisper, told him that the supply of wine was running low, that there might be enough to go around once more, but then it would be all gone. For the gridegroom this was most embarrassing. Where could he get a new lot of wine for his guests since there were no wine-dealers in Cana? The bridegroom had not even thought of such an emergency. He had been of the opinion that the amount of wine which he had provided would last until the wedding came to a close. So now he was really in a state of great embarrassment. You will probably think, "Was that anything so very deplorable, not to have any more wine left? Is it not quite possible to celebrate a wedding, and to be happy on such an occasion, without wine?" I readily admit that such a thing is possible. In order to understand the embarrassment of the bridegroom, however, you must not forget, that his marriage was being celebrated in the Orient, in Palestine. There, people could not even imagine a wedding where no wine was served. Palestine is a great wine country. Few other countries are its equal in this respect. People used to build regular terraces on the steep mountainslopes, and on these terraces the grape vines grew so luxuriantly and to such a size that we never see the like in this country. Even today there are parts of the Holy Land where a single cluster of grapes may weigh from ten to twelve pounds. Each family in Palestine had its own vineyard, and each autumn it laid in a generous supply of wine. In many localities people drink wine or milk in place of water, the water supply, in some instances, being very meagre. The Bible, in a number of passages, speaks of Palestine as the

land that flows with milk and honey, an expression that points to the widely prevailing custom of the people to quench their thirst with milk and wine (the honey, not of the bee, but of the grape). You may imagine, therefore, what the wedding guests would have thought if the bridegroom had been obliged to pass around stale cistern water instead of the customary wine. The whole town would have heard and gossiped about it. People would have pointed the bridegroom out to one another and remarked sarcastically, "That is the fellow at whose wedding the wine gave out; he started in on a large scale, but was not able to carry the thing through; he invited a lot of guests and then had to treat them to cistern water instead of grape-honey." For years they would have continued thus to make fun of him, and probably he never would have heard the last of it. The bridegroom knew what was likely to happen, and for this reason the information given him by the ruler of the feast caused him no little embarrassment. He returned to his place in the middle of the arbor, but his joy was gone and he looked worried. He could think of nothing but the impending lack of wine and the disgrace that seemed to be in store for him. He racked his brain to find a way out of the difficulty, but he could think of none.

Mary, with her fine womanly instinct, was the first one to notice what a change had come over the bridegroom from the moment of his talking with the ruler of the feast. Instinctively she felt that something was not in order. Being a family friend, she left the arbor, went into the house of the bride-groom, and asked the ruler of the feast what had gone wrong. He told her that the wine was nearly all gone. She herself also knew no way out of the predicament, but she thought of her Son, the Lord Jesus. He had always been able to advise her when she was in need of advice. Would He not be able to lend advice and help also in the present instance? Would it not be the proper thing to confide the whole matter to

Him*? So, acting upon this theory, she at once took him aside and in a low tone of voice said to Him, "They have no wine left; the supply is well nigh exhausted." But Jesus refused to be influenced by her on this occasion, saying, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." These words sound rather harsh. Why does Jesus call His mother "woman" instead of "mother"? Why does He refuse to listen to her when she has only told Him of the bridegroom's lamentable embarrassment? He seems to have undergone a complete change, and no longer to be the friendly, loving Jesus of former days. Does He not sympathize with the bridegroom in his embarrassment? Has He no friendly word of advice for His own mother? Let us not be rash in our judgment, children! It is simply impossible that the friendly man, who won the hearts of all, should in the twinkling of an eye have become a man devoid of all tender feeling. He must have had good reasons for answering Mary as He did. He knew of the embarrassment before she had communicated it to Him; He understood only too well what hateful things the people would be apt to say about the bridegroom; His warm heart yearned to relieve the situation, especially since He had to say to Himself that He had helped to create it by adding seven new guests to the wedding party; He was aware, too, that He could lend help far above anything that Mary even imagined, that a single word from His lips would suffice to bring relief to the troubled heart of the bridegroom; since He was the Son of God. But the Father in heaven had not yet given Him a clear sign that He was already to use the power which He, as the Son of God, possessed, and to reveal it before all the people; and without

* This understanding of the situation makes it more difficult to present what follows, but it is demanded by the circumstance that Mary up to that time had not seen Jesus perform miracles, as must be inferred from the express statement that the one wrought by Him in Cana marked "the beginning of His signs".

having received such a sure sign from His Father, He did not want to do or undertake anything. Just as He, up to His thirtieth year, lived in the quiet of Nazareth and went to the Jordan only after the Father had given Him a sign to go there, so He, on the present occasion, did not want to perform a miracle without having been told to do so by His heavenly Father. What His mother said to Him about the embarrassment of the bridegroom seemed to Him like a temptation to do immediately what His heart prompted Him to do, without awaiting orders from the Father in heaven, and when we bear this in mind we can readily understand why He so decidedly refused to act upon His mother's words; for whatever one feels to be a temptation one must always and everywhere resist in the most decided way. In the light of these considerations we also are able to see why Jesus called Mary "woman" and not "mother". When the question at issue had reference to His work as Savior, when it was a matter of deciding what He, as the Savior, was to do and which would be the proper time to do it, His mother was to know right at the start that in matters of this kind she had as little right as any of the other women in Israel to assert her influence; He will recognize no mother, no brother, no sister, as a person from whom He may take orders or receive suggestions in these matters, but depend solely upon the will of His heavenly Father and await His bidding. We should, therefore, not feel disposed to criticize Jesus for refusing to be influenced by His mother at the marriage feast in Cana, but rather thank Him for making it clear to her from the very beginning of His public ministry: "From now on the only guide in all that I do shall be the will of my Father". If instead of making the heavenly Father's will the sole standard of His acts as Savior He had heeded the wishes of His mother, He surely would not have died for us. What will the general say to his mother if she advises him not to enter the battle? Will he, dare he, yield to her influence?

No, it will be his duty to make her understand that he can not be guided by her wishes, to say to her, "I am now in the service of my country, and it is impossible for me to heed your advice; I can now do only what my country demands of me, and I must respond only to my country's call, meanwhile possessing my soul in patience until that call comes". That is what a general would have to say to his mother, and that is just what Jesus said to His mother there in Cana. Consequently, it was something altogether different than if ill-bred children, having become of age, say to their aged father or mother, "This is none of your business; I am not a child any more". No Christian son or daughter would dare to talk like this. What Jesus said to His mother on that occasion He simply was obliged to say to her; that in spite of His seeming sternness He continued to be the Savior, full of love and grace, you will soon have occasion to notice.

Mary must have thought those words of her Son rather strange, and it is not likely that she grasped their full import, their deeper meaning; but that in no way unsettled her faith in Him. She believed and knew that all He did was right and good, even if she could not fully comprehend it in every instance, and that He would lend His help to relieve the embarrassment there at Cana, she doubted so little that she said to the servants, "Whatsoever Jesus says unto you, that do". And Mary was not disappointed. A little later, the cup had just been passed around for the last time in the arbor where the wedding guests were, when Jesus left the arbor and walked over to the house, in the entrance to which the servants were standing helpless. There stood the wine-jugs, but they were empty; one could turn them upside down and not get a drop out of them. But right beside these wine-jugs were placed six large waterpots of stone, each one as large as a pretty good sized barrel. In our picture they are made to appear much too small, for each contained two or three

firkins, and each firkin held about ten gallons. Each waterpot, therefore, was large enough to hold from twenty to thirty gallons, which was about twenty-five gallons on an average. Six times twenty-five or one hundred and fifty gallons was the quantity of liquid that the six waterpots together were capable of holding. For what purpose were these waterpots needed? What urgency was there for keeping in the house one hundred and fifty gallons of water? And yet, they were to be found at that time in all Jewish houses; for the Jews had all sorts of laws that related to the use of water for purifying purposes. Before they sat down to eat, they had to wash their hands; when they returned from the market where they had come in contact with all kinds of people, they had to take a thorough bath; sometimes they also had to subject their chairs and couches to a regular plunge. For all these purposes they needed a great deal of water. But most of them had no well near the house, in some instances there was not even a single well in the whole village. For this reason they were in need of large receptacles in the house to hold the water which they had caught during the rainy season, and which had to last until the next rainy season came. Seeing these large waterpots standing there, Jesus said to the waiters and servants, "Fill the waterpots with water". And they filled them to the brim. Whether there was a large cistern in Cana filled with pure rain-water, and furnishing water for all the people in the village, or whether the servants had to run down to the spring which was about one half hour's walk away from the village, and which bubbled continuously, so that it sent forth an abundance of fresh, clear water, I am not able to decide. At any rate, the servants found water in sufficient quantity to fill all the waterpots to the very brim, so that they were almost running over. Perhaps they wondered what purpose these immense quantities of water were to serve; but they did not like to remonstrate with Jesus; He no doubt had made a deep impression also

upon them. They were, however, soon to have much more cause for being filled with wonder. For Jesus said to them "Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast". They were to take a good cupful to the man who at the marriage feast managed everything that pertained to meat and drink for the guests. It may be that Jesus, before ordering the servants to take a cupful of the liquid to the ruler of the feast, stretched out His hands over the waterpots, as if to bless the water. The ruler of the feast heard what Jesus said to the servants, and so he did not hesitate to take the cup out of the servant's hand and drink of its contents. But how surprised he was when he tasted the first swallow; for it was not water, but the most precious wine; he drank another swallow to see whether he had not been mistaken, but he found that it was really wine, the best that he had tasted for many a day. He did not stop to inquire as to where the wine had suddenly been found. He took it for granted that a wine-jug must have been overlooked but discovered just in the nick of time, or that the bridegroom had merely acted as if he had served his last drop, but had now brought to light some more after all. So he called the bridegroom and said to him in a joking way, "You are a nice fellow, pretending not to have any more wine, and then producing some of the very best. To tell the truth, you did not do this thing as it should have been done. For everyone serves the good wine first and afterwards, when the guests have drunk several rounds and can not tell the difference any more between good and poor wine, the inferior kind; but you have kept the good wine until now". The bridegroom, however, was not in a mood to treat the matter as a joke. He probably said to the ruler of the feast, "Keep still now; do you mean to mock me in my great embarrassment? I know of no wine; I wish I did, so that I could serve it to my guests". When the ruler of the feast saw that the bridegroom was in earnest, and noticed his sad-looking face, he called the servant who had brought him

the cup well filled, and now they began to examine the servant. They fairly bombarded him with such questions as these: "From what jar did you take the wine? Did you take it out of this one? Who filled these waterpots? Who told you to fill them? Where did you get the water? Did some one secretly exchange the jars of water for jars of wine? Where are the other servants who helped you fill the jars?" The others came in, and a second examination began. But the result was the same. At last they were compelled to believe that Jesus, this wonderful man, had changed the water into wine, to relieve the bridegroom from his embarrassment. They sampled the contents of all six of the jars, and in each one they found the same excellent wine.

Now you should have seen the bridegroom. With the happiest looking face in the world he went into the arbor and again filled the cups for the guests; and before they drank of them, he arose and told them in simple words what had taken place, how Jesus had supplied him with so much wine and thus helped him out of his embarrassing situation; he also walked over to Jesus and thanked Him in the presence of the guests. How they all marveled at what they heard and saw! With what feelings of awe and reverence they regarded Jesus! They had not doubted the bridegroom's word, but that Jesus did not contradict him, helped to strengthen their faith. Surely someone Great was in their midst, a man resembling the ancient prophets, friendly in word, mighty in deed; He was able to do and had done what only the Creator is capable of doing. A wedding was not too small an occasion in His eyes, to be graced by His presence, and to be used by Him as an opportunity for showing forth His glory. How grateful was the bridegroom, how proud the mother of Jesus! What He had done was of special significance to His disciples. They had believed the testimony of John concerning Jesus and that of Jesus about Himself. It was sufficient to make them regard Him as the promised

Savior. But now they also saw something of His glory. They saw it shine forth in beauty and splendor. What a great and beautiful Savior He was! They could notice that He did not only control the powers of nature, but also had a heart full of love and friendliness, since He did not think Himself too good to place His power at the service of these poor people, and did not regard the lack of wine at a wedding too trivial an occasion to perform His first miracle, but was glad to be able thus to help a troubled bridegroom out of his embarrassment. This showed that He was a Savior, not only for the great and noble in the world, but also for those who are of low estate; a Savior, not exclusively interested in the higher questions of life, but also helpful in the small cares and worriments with which men's hearts are burdened; a Savior who gives and gives lavishly, providing a newly married pair with wine to last them a long time; a Savior who does not want to deprive people of pure and wholesome joy, but whose aim is rather to preserve, increase and ennoble their joys, raising them to higher levels of expression. We would not need to wonder if the people at the wedding in Cana had thought of that Bible verse, "O taste and see that the Lord is good". The friendliness of Jesus on that occasion was such that they could actually taste and see it. Nor does it surprise me to find that our story closes with the words, "And His disciples believed in Him". They became thoroughly aware of His being their Savior and a Master in the art of making people happy.

Why have I taken you by the hand and had you join me in going with Jesus to the wedding in Cana? Because I want you also to see His glory, and learn to love Him more and more. O children, look at the Savior; He is not a man with a dark, forbidding face, aiming to take away from you all your joys and pleasures. If others tell you so, now or later in life, do not believe them. They only want to frighten you and keep you from following Jesus. It is true, Jesus

does not want you to indulge in pleasures that are tainted by sin, but pure joys He would rather increase than destroy. And when you have your little needs and embarrassments, you may take them to Him in prayer, without fearing that He will think them too trivial to bother with them; if it be for your good, He will place His whole power at your service. Since, then, He is such a friendly and loveable Savior, shall we not willingly follow Him and be His loyal disciples? Yes, let us do this, and even now say to Him:

"Jesus, still lead on
Till our rest be won!
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless.
Guide us by Thy hand
To our Fatherland."

11. How Jesus Blessed Peter's Draught of Fishes.

"Let me go, let me go! Lord, to me Thy presence show!"—this hymn, which we have just finished singing, speaks of our longing to see Jesus in heaven, to be in His presence there and meet Him face to face. That will indeed be something wonderful, when we shall be with Jesus in those heavenly courts and behold Him in all His glory. "What shall be, what shall be, all that joy laid up for me? Lord, I know not, eyes are holden, till Jerusalem the golden, in its beauty I shall see!" However, children, let me tell you this: it will afford us no joy to see Jesus in eternity unless we shall have followed Him here on earth and conducted ourselves as His true disciples. Therefore, let us go, let us go, and behold Him here below, as He sojourned here on earth, traversing the Jewish land in all directions, visiting its different cities and villages, and everywhere making Himself manifest as the Savior. The truth is that unless we learn to love Jesus as He revealed Himself in those blessed days, and take real delight in hearing of His work during the time

when He dwelt among us here on earth, we shall not even have the slightest desire to see Him in those heavenly mansions above. Permit me, then, to take your hand and again lead you to Jesus, that you may see something of His glory as revealed by Him in the days of His earthly pilgrimage. Last Sunday I took you to the wedding in Cana, and you had occasion to see the glory which Jesus manifested there. Today let us direct our foot-steps to Lake Gennesaret and see **how wonderfully Jesus blessed Peter's draught of fishes.**

Lake Gennesaret is located in Galilee, for which reason it is also known as the Galilean Sea (map!). It is thirteen miles long and in places seven miles wide, so that one can hardly look across it from shore to shore. It is situated very low, being 682 feet lower than the surface of the Mediterranean Sea. Both on its western and its eastern shore high mountains tower to the sky. Those on the eastern side of the lake rise right near the edge of the water, and are very abrupt and bare, so that one sees nothing but rough rocks all along the shore. Those on the western side ascend somewhat back from the water's edge, thus leaving room for fields and meadows, cities and villages. Especially is this true in those places where valleys have been formed by the water, and extend down to the sea. In the days of our Savior these regions contained any number of towns and villages, some of them being of considerable size. Right where the Jordan empties its waters into the lake was Bethsaida Julias. A few miles to the southwest, on the great mercantile highway leading from Damascus to Jerusalem, was the populous city of Capernaum. Again only several miles southwestward one came upon another city called Bethsaida. Then followed Magdala, beautifully shaded by its numerous palm-trees, and, a short distance away from the sea, the elevated city of Arbela. Farther along on the shore of the lake stood Tiberias, with its houses and towers of marble, and its hot springs, to which sick people came from far and near, hoping there to

regain their health. There were also many smaller places which we can not stop to mention in particular. Since Lake Gennesaret is situated so low and its shores are protected by mountains from all cold winds, the climate is very mild, so that all kinds of tropical fruits flourish there. The whole region used to abound in oranges, lemons, dates and figs. The lake itself was dotted with all kinds of boats, some of which were used by pleasure seekers, others by numerous fishermen. Its unusually clear waters were alive with fish, and even today abound in these scaly inmates of the deep. For this reason the main occupation of the people living in the cities along the shore was that of catching and selling fish. Great shoals of fish swim through the lake, but no one can tell in advance in what direction. Like an army of soldiers they suddenly appear in closely formed columns, sometimes as many as a hundred thousand. They betray their presence by playing in the water and splashing it into the air. The sun shining upon these sheets of water, makes them glisten like gold and silver. This is the time for children to enjoy the finest kind of sport. For those shoals of fish are occasionally so dense that children can catch any number of them with their hands, with earthen dishes, or with aprons that they spread out like nets. That whole stretch of land along the western shore of Lake Gennesaret is today sad and forsaken, the curse of God resting upon it. But in the days of our Lord it was a region made attractive by its beautiful scenery, by blooming fields and meadows, and by a wreath of cities and villages built along the shore of the lake, and inhabited by thousands of thrifty people.

To the shores of this attractive lake Jesus one day directed His foot-steps. It may have been near the city of Capernaum; for there Jesus resided during the years of His public ministry, so that He might come in contact with the thousands and thousands of people who came together on and at the beautiful lake, and tell them the good news of

the great salvation which He had brought into the world, and to which all were heartily welcome. Some time had then elapsed since He changed water into wine at the wedding in Cana. He had meanwhile been down in Judaea again and there manifested Himself as the Savior; but He had especially traversed large sections of Galilee, preaching to the people and teaching them the way of salvation. Thus quite a movement had been started. People followed Him in great crowds, for He preached with power, as one having authority, and not as the scribes; He also healed the sick whom they brought to Him for that purpose. So on the present occasion, even in the early forenoon, crowds of people followed Him, to hear the word of God. He stood on the shore of the lake and talked to them about the kingdom of His heavenly Father. But while He was talking to them, the crowd grew larger and larger. The new arrivals tried to work their way to the front. The pressure became so great as to be almost irresistible. Jesus found it increasingly hard to make Himself understood by all. What could He do to relieve the situation? While thus reflecting, He caught sight of a large fisher-boat, which had been pulled to shore by its former inmates. It belonged to Peter and Andrew, who were brothers, and both of whom had been with Jesus at the wedding in Cana, as His newly called disciples. Since that time they had temporarily returned to their ordinary work as fishermen, and just the night before they had evidently been trying their hand at catching fish. For they were sitting on the shore now and washing their nets, which had to be cleaned from mud and weeds that stuck to them, before they could be hung up to dry. Jesus stepped into the boat and asked Peter to push off a little. This Peter did most willingly. He pushed the boat out into the water, climbed into it, took hold of the oars, and with a few good strokes rowed it to a distance of about fifty feet away from the shore. Then he let down the anchor, and soon the boat was held fast. Jesus now sat down

and preached to the people who were standing along the shore, or sitting on stones and drift-wood. The ship was the pulpit, the blue sky, arched like a beautiful dome, was the church, and the sounds produced by the waves were like the tones of an organ, accompanying the words that Jesus spoke. You may think that this was a strange sort of church, however, it answered the purpose very well. For now all could hear Jesus preach, while He had them all before Him and could look directly into their eyes. Right at the front were seated (picture!) some noble women, who had followed Him, because His preaching had found a deep response in their hearts. Close beside them were women from the ranks of the plain people, holding their little ones on their laps. Young men of the higher classes of society stood there, but also men from the simpler walks of life, among them weatherbeaten fishermen. James and John, seated in the boat, have abandoned their nets and are paying good attention to what the Master is saying. Farther back we see another boat, but its inmates are still near enough to hear every word of Christ's sermon.

That was a sight to gladden the Master's heart, filling it with a joy purer and greater than that which fills the heart of any faithful pastor when he faces a church full of attentive listeners, or than that which a teacher experiences when his pupils look at him with their bright eyes, showing that they are eager not to let one of his words escape them. No doubt, Jesus also took delight in viewing the beautiful landscape, realizing that it was the handiwork of His Father in heaven. But the green mountains, and the splashing waters, to which the light of the morning sun lent a golden hue, did not begin to give Him the inspiration which He derived from the crowds of people who sat before Him, absorbing every word of His, much as the thirsty ground absorbs the refreshing rain. For those were hungry and thirsty souls, who without the meat and drink of His words would have suffered spiritual death. To them He must have spoken in the most eloquent terms of

the heavenly Father's infinite love, which yearns to receive all and to forgive the sins of all who come to Him firmly trusting in His grace and mercy. The key-note of His sermon must have been, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; I will give you rest. Blessed are ye who hunger and thirst after righteousness; for ye shall be filled with righteousness, peace and joy. If ye but come to Me, ye shall find rest for your souls". He spoke so earnestly, and yet so kindly, that the people said to one another, "This is indeed an altogether new message, a Gospel, good tidings of great joy, imparting to the hearts of men that which supplies their deepest needs, casting out fear and imbuing the soul with that peace which passes all understanding". They began to appreciate Jesus as the Fountain of all true joy and blessing. The friendliness, the loving kindness, the glory of Jesus brought sunshine to their hearts. The furrows of care on their foreheads were smoothed. A new hope looked out of their eyes. They were in a mood which would have enabled them to sing from their hearts, "Let me go, let me go! Lord, to me Thy presence show!" Some of them right then and there made up their minds to follow Jesus, to become and to remain His disciples.

We can say this with certainty of Peter and others who were with him on that occasion. For when Jesus had finished preaching His sermon, He said to Simon Peter, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught". Peter was to row out into the middle of the sea, where the water was very deep, and there he and those with him were to let down their nets for a haul of fish. To Simon Peter, the old and experienced fisherman, these orders must have seemed very strange. "What," thought he, "I am to let down the nets now, in bright daylight, when the sun shines so warm as to make the fish dive down into the cool water below? And why let down the nets way out in the middle of the lake? That is contrary to all the rules of

fishermen, for anyone who has tried his hand at catching fish in these waters will agree with me if I say that the best time for catching fish in Lake Gennesaret is at night, and the best place is near the shore. Besides, we have been out on the lake all night and have let down our nets in the most favorable places, without catching a single fish. How can we expect to catch any now, and out in deep water, at that? How contrary this is to sound reasoning! This Jesus may be a good preacher, but He certainly does not know much about catching fish". Such thoughts naturally occurred to Simon Peter, and we would not need to be surprised if he had said to the Lord, "Master, Thou evidently art not familiar with the established rules of fishermen; for this is not a time of day when fish are caught". But Simon Peter made no such reply. While Jesus was preaching from the ship, Peter had received such a deep impression of the Lord's glory that he could not have given Him an answer of this type. As he listened to Jesus, it had become clear to him that Jesus was different from all other men, that He was able to win human hearts, that back of His words was more than a power possessed by any ordinary man, however eloquent he might be. Peter, therefore, suppressed his thoughts and objections as quickly as they arose in his reasoning mind. Not even the slightest smile played about his mouth to show that he deemed the words of Jesus contrary to his best judgment. He did say, "Master, we have labored all night and have not caught anything"; however, he immediately added, "but at Thy word I will let down the net". That was obedience of the right kind, obedience grown out of a vital trust in Jesus.

Moreover, he went to work immediately, raised the anchor, set the sail, sat down, and, together with his brother Andrew, put his hands to the oars and rowed the boat out into the middle of the lake. There they let down the net, and, behold, what they had not been able to do by exercising their own power and prudence during the entire previous

night, that was given them now, when Peter let down the net in obedience to the Master's words. They even received much more than they could have achieved by any effort of their own. For with their net they enclosed such a multitude of fish that the meshes of the net began to tear along the edges, where Peter and Andrew were clinging to it with their hands, and that they had to beckon to their partners, James and John, who had come out into the middle of the sea in another boat, to come and help them put the great haul of fish into the boat. There were indeed so many fish that they filled both boats with them, and that both became so heavily loaded as to sink beneath their burden, although, of course, they were still afloat. They had struck one of those great shoals of fish about which I told you a few moments ago that even today they swim through Lake Gennesaret, like a countless army. But who had brought it about that they came across this mighty army of fish swimming through the sea, and that, too, at such an unseasonable hour and in such an unusual place? That had been brought about by no one else than by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As at the wedding in Cana He had caused water to become changed into wine, so at Lake Gennesaret He controlled the shoal of fish in its course and made it enter Peter's net, even though he let down the net at what he deemed the wrong time and place. He granted His blessing to Peter's work, and for this reason it could not fail to yield results. Except the Lord Jesus build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain. But where He keeps watch one is safe from harm; where He lends His blessing, one is blessed indeed. There is no savior and no helper like Him. By His blessing one grows rich without effort. Do you not begin to catch glimpses of our Savior's glory, of His love and kindliness?

Peter noticed it. His hand trembled as he took the fish out of the net, for he, as well as Andrew, James and John,

who were his partners, was amazed at the draught of fish which they had taken. Were they, then, not glad to see what a wonderful haul they had made? Yes, after a while; but at first a sense of fear came over them. Peter had to say to himself, "Who is this Jesus, that He should have known in advance about the great army of fish that would pass by in the water just at this time and hour? Who is He, that He should be able to control the course of the fishes in the sea? God alone is omniscient and only He is almighty; what kind of a man must this Jesus be if He knows what only God can know and does what only God can do? I thought He was a man like others, though somewhat superior to them, because I believed Him to be the promised Savior and Redeemer. But He must be more, He must stand right near God, or be God Himself, since He has shown that He knows all and can do all things. If, however, He is so near to God, or even is Himself God, what am I in contrast to Him? He is holy, while I am full of faults and sins. A sinner and the Holy One, however, do not belong together". And no sooner had he thought this than he fell down at Jesus' feet, as people in those days fell down before a king, and with fear and trembling exclaimed, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" In reality, Peter did not want Jesus to depart from him, for it would have been in accord with his deepest longing to embrace Jesus and say, "Abide with me, because there is no one who can bless as Thou hast blessed me". But he did not dare to venture doing this, fearing that he would perish if he drew near to this Holy One.

What do you think the Savior did in reacting to what Peter had said to Him? Do you imagine that He departed from Peter and left him alone with his sins? Children, if you thought Jesus capable of abandoning Peter under those circumstances, that would simply show that you do not understand the Savior. For His way of thinking runs along lines like these: "Where sinners are there I must be, not that I

may destroy them, but that I may forgive them their sins and lead them into the paths of righteousness". So He did not think of leaving Peter; He had now brought him to the very point at which He had wanted him to arrive, inasmuch as Peter realized that he was a sinner, who needed a Savior, in order not to be lost. That is why He said to Peter in tones of kindliness and love, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men". What He meant was this: "Do not be terrified on account of your sins; I am indeed the Holy One, yet not that I may destroy you, but that I may save you from your sin; I am the Holy One, in order that I may forgive you your sins and thus make you holy, thereby enabling you to stand in My presence and have fellowship with Me. Yes, I will even make you be My disciple constantly, so that you may always stay in My presence. Just as you have let down the net and caught fish, so are you from now on to preach the word of God and thereby bring people out of the kingdom of sin into My kingdom, in which only such people are found whose sins have been forgiven and whom I have thus made holy". O what a Savior Jesus is! He begins by preaching as no one before Him had ever preached, filling the hearts of His listeners with a sense of joy and peace; He continues by blessing the work of His disciples far beyond all power of telling or understanding, and He ends by receiving the repentant sinner into His fellowship, forgiving him all his sins and making him a fisher of men, a preacher of the Gospel, a messenger to proclaim the glad tidings of His kingdom. Children, you may search creation around, but nowhere will you find one who is so loving, so kind, so gracious, so merciful as Jesus.

Peter realized this, as did Andrew, James and John. That is why they left all, and followed Him. Not only had they once more learned to see in Him their Lord and Savior, but they now gave up their former calling altogether and entered the school of Jesus, that He Himself might train them to be-

come true preachers and messengers of His kingdom. They said to one another, "Let us go, let us go, with the Master here below; since to Him our hearts are turning, and He satisfies our yearning by His presence, as we know". And to Jesus they said, "Jesus, still lead on, till our rest be won, and although the way be cheerless, we will follow calm and fearless; guide us by the hand to the Fatherland".

What are we intending to do? O let us pray that Jesus may come to us, forgive us our sins and stay with us always. Let us pray that His blessing may rest upon every work that we undertake to do, since there is no blessing like that which He can lend. And if Jesus should some day ask of you any special service, if He should want to make a pastor or a missionary of some one among you boys, and of some one among you girls a Sunday school teacher or a deaconess, to wait upon the poor and the sick in Christian love, without pay, then do not say to Him, "No, I do not want to", but say to Him, "Here I am, ready to serve Thee wherever my services may be needed". Thus you will be following Jesus, and He will bless you beyond measure.

12. How Jesus Saved His Disciples During a Storm.

"How the wind in fury blind sets the sea a-going! Where, then, can we shelter find while the gale is blowing? One there is who in the night well doth guard us by His might: Christ, come to be with us upon the sea! How the star-lit sky grows black, and the clouds are flying! If the ship's frail rudder crack, who will hear our crying? One there is who hears our cries,—See the Day star in the skies! Christ, deign to be with us upon the sea!"—these are the first two verses of the hymn that we have just sung. Let us take note of their contents. They both speak of a ship at sea which is seized by a terrific

storm, so that all its inmates seem to be lost; but they also make mention of One who has power to save even from the fiercest gale. That is why both these verses end with a prayer. "Christ, come to be with us upon the sea! Christ, deign to be with us upon the sea!" Today I want to tell you a story which also treats of a great storm at sea, and at the same time shows how Jesus responded to the prayer of His disciples and came to their rescue. Give me your close attention, then, as I relate to you **how Jesus saved His disciples in a storm.**

One day Jesus had been unusually busy preaching to the people, who came to Him in ever increasing numbers. During the pauses, He had also healed many sick people, for whoever was afflicted with pain and suffering took refuge to Him, and in His friendliness He helped them all, as the great Physician who is able to conquer even the most serious sickness or disease. Oh, how glad the sick were when He laid His hands upon them and restored them to health by simply speaking the word, "Be thou made whole!" So you may imagine how the people flocked to Him with their sick and afflicted. But when one has to talk for a long while, he grows heartily tired. You only need to ask your teacher whether he is not good and tired after he has been in school with you from nine o'clock in the morning to four in the afternoon. Must it not, therefore, have made Jesus tired to teach and preach almost continuously for a whole day? Nor does it tax anyone's strength less to wait on sick people and effect their cure. Just ask a doctor about it, who is over-run by sick people form early in the morning till late at night. True, it was not necessary for Jesus to examine the sick and to study all the symptoms of their sickness before He could tell of what nature it was and what remedies had to be applied to overcome it; He could see at a glance what ailed a person, and a mere word spoken by Him was sufficient to make even the sickest person well instantly. And yet, the

Savior grew tired from His dealing with the sick; for it saddened His soul to see so much misery, He could not but feel deeply grieved when He beheld how sin and Satan had conspired to cause humanity such suffering and wretchedness. As often as He healed a sick person, He had to battle against sin and Satan, the enemies of mankind, through whom sickness was brought into the world. To contend against these powers of darkness, however, taxed His strength and made Him feel tired. For although Jesus was true God, He was also true man, whose soul and body grew fatigued like those of any other human being. And when one is tired, he longs for rest, especially in the evening. So when there at Capernaum, on the northwestern shore of Lake Gennesaret, where Jesus had labored so ardently throughout the day, the shades of evening began to fall upon hill and dale, He felt a desire to withdraw from the crowds and enjoy a few hours of undisturbed rest. He therefore said to His disciples, "Get the ship in readiness, and let us cross over to the other shore of the sea." The boat-ride out upon the water, after the hot sun had disappeared behind the mountains, was to give Him an opportunity for gaining rest and recreation. The disciples were not slow in responding to the Master's demand. While they had followed Jesus and become His disciples, they had not disposed of the boats which some of them had previously owned, and used in plying their trade as fishermen. It would indeed seem that Peter, together with Andrew, perhaps also in common with James and John, owned a ship of considerable size, upon which Jesus and His twelve disciples, as well as a number of others, could be comfortably seated. We may assume that it was this ship which the disciples now put in readiness for a ride across Lake Gennesaret, with Jesus in their midst. It was a sail-boat, for in those days people had not yet come to use boats driven by steam, gasoline or electric motors. In the middle of the boat there

was a long pole which towered up into the sky, and which was called the mast. To this mast were fastened a number of sails, swelled by the evening breeze and causing the boat to move forward. It was steered by means of the oars, which were also used to move the boat, especially when there was little or no wind to fill the sails. Soon the disciples had gotten everything ready for the start. Jesus, therefore, entered the boat, as did His disciples and several others who also wanted to cross over to the other side of the lake. Since He was tired and wanted to rest, He at once went to the stern of the boat, took a pillow or cushion upon which the pilot usually sat, laid His head upon it and immediately fell a-sleep. Softly the wind blew across His face and cooled His cheeks, while the splashing waves sang a low, sweet lullaby.

It was a beautiful evening. A moderate breeze slightly ruffled the blue surface of the water. The green hills that girded the lake on the west side were still being touched by the golden rays of the setting sun. The disciples sat near together in a friendly group and talked with one another, though in a subdued tone of voice, so as not to disturb their Master in His slumber. I imagine they once more busied their minds with what they had heard and seen during the day. Precious words had come from His lips, words whose meaning could not be exhausted, however deeply one might reflect upon them. How full of sympathy He had shown Himself toward the sick and how wonderfully He had helped them all! What a privilege for them to be this Man's disciples! What an advantage for them to enjoy His fellowship day after day! How rich and happy their lives had become through the Savior!

Such were their thoughts and reflections, when suddenly a sharp gust of wind swept over the sea. It came from the western shore, and was nothing uncommon on Lake Gennezaret. Such squalls are of frequent occurrence on that

lake even today. It, therefore, caused the disciples no great surprise, most of them having been familiar with the whims of Lake Gennesaret from their boyhood days. Nor did it frighten them particularly; but they were somewhat unpleasantly disturbed. They had to stop conversing with each other, arise from their seats, furl the sails, pay attention to the sea, and row the boat through the waves in such a way as not to steer out of their course, but to land on the opposite shore at the place which they had selected as their destination. But the fight with the waves grew increasingly difficult. The squall developed into a terrific storm. Such a swift gale is bad enough when it occurs on land. In the summer time we frequently have storms of great violence. The sky becomes overcast with dark clouds, hiding the sun from our view and changing the brightness of noonday into the darkness of night. The force of the wind increases, the leaves rustle, the trees are swayed to and fro, the dust is blown up and makes it almost impossible for one to keep his eyes open. The birds appear frightened, and seek shelter under the roofs of buildings or in large trees, the cows and horses look about for protection, even the dog cringes before his master, instinctively sensing danger and disaster. When thus the wind grows stronger and stronger, moving with terrific swiftness, shaking the trees to their very roots, even blowing them over with a loud crash; when one peal of thunder follows the other and zig-zag flashes of lightening shoot down out of the black clouds overhead, flashes that fairly blind one's eyes, then not only are you children frightened and run to mother or father, but also many an adult person begins to quake with fear and prays, silently or aloud, "Spare, O spare us, good Lord!" We must not forget, however, that the disciples of Jesus were on the water, where it is far more terrible to be overtaken by a storm. If one happens to be on a river, it may be possible for him to reach the shore before the storm has fully developed. But such a thing was

impossible here on Lake Gennesaret, a body of water thirteen miles long and seven miles wide. There the wind swept down through the valleys from the west, blew across the sea with terrific force, struck the high mountains and rocks on the opposite side, rebounded into the sea and so stirred its waters that huge waves were formed, seething and roaring most frightfully. Who at such a time was on the sea in his frail ship, might have said, with the words of our hymn, "How the wind in fury blind sets the sea a-going! Where, then, can we shelter find while the gale is blowing?" He might have felt prompted to call upon God for help, because human power can effect nothing when faced by such a gale. The disciples of Jesus did not immediately lose courage. The waves dashed into the ship, but the disciples baled out the water with large pails. The billows threw the boat out of its course, but they put their hands to the oars and steered it with all their might, until it again headed toward the eastern shore. They toiled like men who knew that it was a matter of life and death with them. When they took their eyes off from their work and cast a swift glance out upon the foaming sea, it seemed to them as if it were raging, and shouting to them in wrathful tones, "I will devour every last one of you." At such moments, the storm does not only rage outside, but also sets the hearts of men a-stir. The disciples were seized with fear and terror. Death seemed to be staring at them. Their plight is now quickly growing desperate. The water is being thrown into the boat much more quickly than they can bale it out. All their efforts to battle against the waves and keep the ship in its course prove in vain. Any moment the ship may be sent to the bottom. It is this moment of extreme danger that the artist has tried to represent here in our picture. Peter still has his hand on the rudder; he will stay at his post and so die, if death is indeed his inevitable fate. Andrew and John are clinging to the pole and the sail fastened to it; they have taken down

the sail to lessen the danger of capsizing. John is holding to the mast, so that the fierce wind may not throw him overboard. Right over John's head we see the hand of Judas, who also is anxious to find some means of keeping himself from being blown into the raging sea. Another disciple has taken his oar out of its socket, having found it quite impossible to effect the course of the ship in the least. All are pressing toward the middle of the ship, as if to avoid being washed away by the waves. One of their number has his hands folded and is offering a prayer to God for himself and those with him in the ship. Oh, what a storm that must have been!

But where was Jesus all through the storm? Did He not see the raging of the waves and the mortal fear of His disciples? Jesus was still asleep, resting in peace. His face showed no trace of fear, but all his features reflected the deep peace that filled His soul. He was the only quiet and unmoved object in all this turmoil of the elements, in all this storm of the emotions. If only the disciples had fixed their eyes upon the Lord and Master, instead of casting anxious glances out upon the restless waves, some of His rest and peace might have been transferred to their own hearts. They would have grown courageous right in the midst of the storm. They would have said to themselves, "As long as our Master is with us, we shall be safe. Should He not be able to help us who changed water into wine? Should He permit us to perish whom the fish in the sea must obey, entering our nets at His will and command? Should He Himself go down to destruction, He who came into the world to be the Savior and Rescuer of all men?" And this is precisely what they should have thought and said to themselves. Thus they would have shown true faith, since it is the characteristic feature of faith that it does not look upon the turbulent elements and other enemies that loom up before one's eyes, but rather directs its eyes and thoughts wholly upon the

Lord, thus gaining peace of soul and courage to take a firm stand amid the greatest dangers. It faces death bravely and says, "Through my Lord and Master, I shall live even though death should seize me." The disciples did not yet have this firm, unshakable faith. It looks as if at first they had not thought of their Lord and Master at all. Their thoughts were entirely occupied by their work; they tried to save themselves by their own power. Not until they noticed that this was out of the question, not until death and destruction were all that they could see before them, did they wake up Jesus and shout to Him, "Lord, help us; we perish!" Some of them even added, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?"

And Jesus awakes from His sleep. He sees the towering waves and hears their loud roaring. But He does not cry out in despair, He does not wring His hands, He does not even tremble and grow pale. With a face calm and serene He looks out upon he sea, and in the same way He meets the eyes of His disciples. And as if the waves were not that which most urgently needed His attention, as if rescue from the fury of the sea were not that which was of the first importance, He makes no preparations for lending help, but takes time to rebuke His disciples, and says to them, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" He wanted to say this: "It is well that you have awakened Me and believe that I can deliver you from your perilous situation; but if your faith were big instead of little, strong instead of weak, you would not speak of perishing, you would not fear and tremble; you would have said to yourselves, and continued to say, 'As long as our Master is with us, we have nothing to fear'." Were these words all that He had to offer His disciples under those perilous circumstances, when every momentary postponement of help might spell death and disaster? O in this case He would not have been the same Master anymore. Should He not come to the rescue of His own who there at the wedding in Cana could not even bear

to see a bridegroom embarrassed because of a scarcity of wine, but graciously helped him out of His predicament? Most assuredly, we know our Savior well enough for that. And just what did He do? He arose. For what purpose? Was He going to help His disciples row, or bale out water? No, Jesus was going to do something more, something greater. Behold, now He stands upright in the frail ship. He is the only one who does not falter in this storm. Not the slightest trembling of His body is there to indicate the presence of fear or disquietude in His heart. Then He opens His lips, like a general about to utter a command to his soldiers, and shouts to the howling storm, as with a voice of thunder, "Peace, be still!" And, Oh, what a wonder, the winds and the sea obey Him! The winds cease blowing. The waves grow smaller and smaller, until the surface of the sea is perfectly quiet, and there is a great calm.

Such was the help that Jesus lent His disciples there on Lake Gennesaret. Great as the danger was, there was a Greater One to meet it. Who could have duplicated the help that He rendered there on the sea? Would Peter have accomplished anything by shouting to the wind and the sea, "Peace, be still"? Could you and I, or the mightiest ruler on earth, have effected a calm by merely commanding the wind and the waters to cease their roaring? No, the storm would not have heeded our words in the least. Never yet has mere man been able thus to silence the wind and the waves. Jesus only could do it because He is more than mere man, because He is both God and man in one person. There the disciples stood and gazed at their Master. They had already seen Him do many wonderful things, but this was the most wonderful of them all. In accents low they said to one another, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" And how it made them feel ashamed now to think that they had been so filled with fear! They said to themselves, "How foolish it was of us to

think for a moment that our ship could meet disaster as long as Jesus was with us!" Then they continued to sail quietly across to the eastern shore of the lake. In their hearts, however, they dedicated themselves still more fully to the Lord, and formed the resolution, "In the future we shall have unwavering trust in Him, our mighty Lord and Savior."

Dear children, will you not follow their example? For I did not take you by your hand today and lead you to Jesus in order that you might see how He saved His disciples during a great storm, and be overcome with a sense of wonder, but I did it in the hope that you might learn to believe in Him still more firmly than heretofore, and to trust in Him with all your heart. It is not likely that you will very soon take a ride on the sea and there become exposed to a great storm. But one may experience a storm without being on the sea. Storms come on land also, and sometimes a storm will arise within the heart, when all is quiet outside, so that not a leaf can be heard rustling in the tree. Your father may be taken sick and rendered unfit to earn a living for himself and his family. Your mother may die and thus be taken from you. Such an experience would be like a dangerous storm in your life. If you were without a father, who would provide you with the necessaries of life, such as meat and drink, clothing and shoes? If you were without a mother, who would there be to take her place, to teach you how to pray, to keep you on the right path, to train you in the things that make you acceptable to both God and men? Or, to use another illustration, you ride to town and the horses shy; you sit in the street car and it runs off the track just where the hill is steep, who is to be your Helper in such times of danger? Who is to protect you? Children, in all such perilous moments, remember that the Lord is with you, according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Although you can not see him with your eyes, He is nevertheless with you. Even today He also has

power to rescue His own in times of danger; for He says, "Unto Me is given all power in heaven and on earth." There is no storm so fierce and no need so urgent but that He is able to lend us help. You must bear in mind, however, that He does not always help you according to your wish and desire. His help often differs from your conception of what it should be. He does not always cure the sick when you ask Him to help them; He allows father, mother, sister, or brother to die, though you may have asked Him to spare their lives; He may even permit you to lose your life in some accident, much as you would prefer to come out of the accident uninjured. In all such instances He knows better than you what is best and most salutary for you. But there is a kind of help that He **never** refuses us, and that is help for the soul, the kind of help that will not let the soul suffer shipwreck and perish in the storm of death. For through death He wants to take us unto Himself in heaven, in order that we may be with Him always. And He can do this. The prayer of a certain hymn is true: "Thou canst softly lead us mortals through death's portals and above all evils raise." So even when the storm of death sweeps down upon us, there is One who can help us safely through it. He in strength surpasseth even the fiercest gale, though it be the storm of death itself.

Now, when may we be so perfectly sure that no storm will really cause us any harm? When Jesus is with us in the ship as we sail over life's solemn main, when we say to Him, "Jesus, still lead on till our rest be won, and although the way be cheerless, we will follow calm and fearless. Guide us by Thy hand to the Fatherland." And is He, the strong, the almighty Savior, not worth being thus followed? Should we not be ready to say to Him, "Alone I will not wander one single day; be Thou my true Companion, and with Me stay"? O children, let us, therefore, resolve anew this very day ever to have Jesus with us, and not to doubt in the least

that He will lead us in the right way. Such faith, such trust, makes one happy and confident. To illustrate this let me, in closing, tell you the following brief story: A large ship, with hunderds of passengers, was sailing across the ocean. A terrific storm developed, and every moment the ship threatened to go down. Those on board the ship were lamenting and wringing their hands, ready to despair. There was, however a small boy on the deck, playing as usual, without being disturbed in the least by the raging storm. He was the son of the pilot. Some one called to him, "Don't you know that we may all be drowned? Why, then, are you so happy and unconcerned?" The boy answered, "My father is the pilot, and he is at his post." That boy had confidence in his father. Let us have confidence in Jesus, and say to Him, "Jesus, Savior, pilot me over life's tempestuous sea." Then at last whether it be here on earth or there in heaven, we shall experience what is expressed in the last verse of that hymn:

"When the storm has ceased to blow,
And the stars are glowing,
Through the waves we safely row,
Praise on Him bestowing.
Him we laud with heart and voice,
Yea, in Him we e'er rejoice.
Hail, Christ, to Thee,
Thou Sovereign of the sea!"

13. How Jesus Fed the Hungry Multitudes.

"Let us go with Jesus", this is what we said to one another, and this is what we did. In spirit we accompanied Him to the wedding at Cana and saw how He changed water into wine, so that the bridegroom might not suffer embarrassment, but remain in a joyous frame of mind to the end of

his marriage festivities. We went with Him as he directed His footsteps toward Lake Gennesaret, on whose beautiful shores He was so fond of being, heard of His remarkable sermon which so gladdened the hearts of the people, and of the wonderful draught of fishes that He brought about by making the fish enter the large net which Simon Peter had let down at His request. The last time we, in imagination, even entered the ship with Him, witnessed the terrific storm, and saw the raging waves grow quiet at His command, so that there was a great calm. Has not the Savior thus found His way into your hearts, and so grown into your lives as to prompt you to say to Him, "Lord, in pleasure and in sorrow Thy companion I would be; now and for my each tomorrow I surrender all to Thee"? In order that you may learn to cherish Him still more and with still greater clearness to behold His glory, His friendliness and plenteous grace, I want to take you with me today and let you see **how Jesus fed the hungry multitudes.**

Spring had again made its appearance, and the Passover festival of the Jews, which was their Easter, had drawn very near. Usually, the advent of spring brings joy to our hearts and fills them with new hopes. Jesus also had a fine sense of appreciation for the sprouting and growing that begins with the arrival of springtime, and He no doubt took notice of it with feelings of joy in His heart, since He, even more than we, saw in the revival of nature from the death of winter the hand of His Father in heaven. This time, however, we find Jesus in a state of deep sadness. He had just received a very sad message, one that moved His heart to its very depths. It was the message of the death of John the Baptist. As the larger pupils among you know, John was the fore-runner of Christ, and had to prepare the way for Him, the way into the hearts of His people Israel. This man, this great prophet and preacher, who had pointed to Jesus, exclaiming, "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh

away the sins of the world", had been put to death by the wicked king Herod*. The impious ruler had cast John into prison, but afterwards, while he, the king, was seated at the table with others and celebrating his birthday, he ordered the executioner to behead John; so the latter went to the prison, severed the head of John from his body, brought it on a charger, and carried it in to Herodias. Of this Jesus had just heard, and it made Him feel very sad. It caused Him think of His own end. If His fore-runner had been subjected to such treatment, what else could He Himself expect? Since Herod had so grievously sinned against John, there was reason for Jesus to believe that the people would prove guilty of a much greater sin by slaying Him, their Savior. We need not wonder that under such circumstances Jesus felt the desire to withdraw from the crowds and go into solitude, that He might there pray to His heavenly Father and ask Him for strength to continue steadfast on His way as Savior, even unto the end. But His disciples could also profit by taking a rest. In the name of Jesus they had done mighty deeds, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom which their Master had brought into the world, and in His power healing the sick and afflicted. They had just returned form an extented preaching tour, and joyfully told their Master of the wonderful things which they had accomplished as His messengers. It was necessary for Jesus to take His disciples into a place where He could be alone with them and so influence their hearts as not to let them become filled with false pride. They needed a season of repose, in order to overcome their inner restlessness. Be-

* It was Herod Antipas, a descendant of the Herod who had slain the little children in and about Bethlehem (cf. Luke 13, 32; Mark 8, 15; Matth. 14, 1 ff.; Mark 6, 17 ff.; Luke 3, 19 ff.; 13, 31; 23, 7). He ruled over Galilee and the land east of the Jordan. His residence was in Tiberias on the Galilean Sea, which city he had chosen as his capital.

sides, at the place where Jesus was just then staying with His disciples, there were so many people coming and going that neither He nor His disciples could find time to take their meals. So Jesus, even more concerned about His disciples than about Himself, said to them, "Come ye yourselves apart in a desert place, and rest a while." So He withdrew from the multitude, and, accompanied by His disciples, went down to the shore of Lake Gennesaret, entered a boat, and sailed in the direction of Bethsaida Julias (map!). There they left the ship, went up into a mountain, and sat down to rest.

However, they were not permitted to stay alone very long. The people even followed Jesus to the lonely place in the wilderness. They had soon noticed that He was departing from Capernaum in a ship and sailing in the direction of Bethsaida on the opposite shore of the lake. So without taking any time for deliberation, they decided to join Him at His destination. In order to do this, they started out on foot, with the intention of walking around the northern end of the lake, and thus reaching Bethsaida Julias, the point toward which Jesus and His disciples were headed in their boat. The news of Jesus, the great Prophet and Performer of miracles, had long since traveled through the entire province of Galilee, and from all directions people came to see and to hear Him. Some of these people may already have been on their way to the Passover festival at Jerusalem. They had chosen the road that led through Capernaum, in order that they might meet Jesus there. By following Him to Bethsaida, they were going considerably out of their way, but that did not trouble them. They could make up for lost time later, the main thing just now was to see and hear Jesus. They were fairly hungry to be with Him. Besides, some of them had brought their sick with them, hoping that Jesus would restore them to health. So they undertook to walk way around the sea. The ship in which Jesus and His disciples were seated, sailed rather slowly, so that the people did not

reach the opposite shore much later than He. They could still see Jesus and His disciples ascending the mountain, and had no trouble in finding the place where He had sat down with them.

When Jesus lifted up His eyes, He saw them coming up the hill, headed toward Him. They were arriving by thousands. In all Bethsaida down on the shore there were not so many people as here flocked together to see and hear Jesus. The poor and lowly among them were especially numerous, but there were also those who belonged to the so-called higher classes of society. There were to be seen in these crowds men whom one could immediately recognize as beggars, since they had nothing but a plain sheepskin wrapped around their bodies; there where among them fishermen and those who dealt in fish, people who hailed from the region surrounding the sea; there were carpenters, masons, and other mechanics, as well as tax-collectors, from the city of Capernaum; there were peasants and laborers from the valleys between the ranges of hills west of the sea; there were spinners of flax and weavers of linen from Arbela, and wood-cutters from the forests on the slopes of Mount Lebanon. But there were also those who had joined the multitude at Tiberias, that aristocratic city in which King Herod resided, and among these one could find people of various callings: scribes or copyists, men holding political offices, dealers in wine and oil, goldsmiths and stone cutters, waiters from the great bath-houses; and slaves of all kinds. I would not be surprised if there had been a scattering of soldiers also, who came from the Roman garrison at Capernaum or from the royal city of Tiberias, where military companies naturally had their head-quarters. Generally speaking, we may say that it was a large, mixed crowd of men, women and children that wended its way up the hill to the place where Jesus was seated with His disciples. We should not forget to mention the sick who were in the great, promiscuous crowd; they had come

of their own accord, or others had brought them along, in order that Jesus might heal them. As soon as they had come within hearing distance of Jesus, the people sat down on rocks which lay scattered around there in the desert regions, or reclined upon the grass which at that season of the year grew there in abundance. For when it is said that Jesus retired to a desert place, we must not imagine that it was a desert in the strictest sense of the word, where nothing but sand and stones could be seen. We must rather think of it as a place where the soil was not usable for agricultural purposes, but where in spots there was an abundance of fine, juicy grass, to which the herdsmen liked to go with their flocks of cattle, goats and sheep. It is not improbable that when the multitudes came to Jesus in those regions, a flock of sheep could be seen at a distance, carefully watched by shepherds.

Indeed, those multitudes of people who came to Jesus, and whom He saw gathering at His feet, seemed to Him like a flock of sheep, but like one without a shepherd. It is true, they had shepherds, but these showed no concern for the sheep entrusted to their care. Those who were called to be teachers and leaders of the people burdened them with all kinds of laws, but did not show them the fountain out of which they could have gained strength to bear these burdens. Instead of making it a constant practice to lead the people into the psalms and the prophets, with their words of strength, comfort and life, they talked to them only of the law and of the statutes which they had added to the laws of Moses. All that the people heard, was the re-iterated, "Thou shalt, thou shalt not!" To the Jewish teachers of that time, the whole Old Testament was nothing but a collection of laws and statutes, similar to the collections of ordinances and judicial decisions that we can see in our own country when we enter the office of a lawer, with its shelves of books in yellow binding. And God Himself was to them

only a Legislator and Judge, without sympathy, without compassion. That the Bible is a precious gift of God to man, a great source-book of hope and consolation; that God is merciful and gracious, ready at all times to help and restore His people, that they had entirely forgotten. Is it strange, then, if by such teachers and preachers the souls of the people were not nourished, if these hungry masses were indeed as sheep that have no shepherd and for this reason can not find the pasture which they need? The ever repeated, "Thou shalt, thou shalt not!" helps the human soul about as much as it benefits a hungry man to hand him a stone.

The heart of Jesus was moved to its depths with sympathy and compassion when He saw these people, who were hungry for food, but did not receive any, who longed for healthy, refreshing pastures, but could find them nowhere. He said to himself, "I will be their Shepherd and lead them to green pastures." And now He began to preach to them so tenderly, so compassionately, that every word was like fresh water to the thirsty and like healthy, nourishing food to the hungry. Certainly, He also talked to them of the things that He must require of His disciples, of the duties that they must fulfill as citizens of His kingdom; but He spoke much more of His heavenly Father's overflowing love, which does not want a single sinner to be lost, and therefore goes after him, just as a shepherd goes after his lost sheep until he has found it. As God in former days, when the Children of Israel were on the march through the wilderness, gave them water from the rock to drink and manna from heaven to eat, in order to refresh and strengthen them bodily, so He now wishes to give men spiritual meat and drink, in order that their souls may not perish, but be ever refreshed and strengthened, as they journey through the desert of this life. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting

life." In such a strain Jesus talked to the multitude. And He closed His talk by extending to them the urgent invitation, "Come unto **Me,** all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, I will give you rest; take **my** yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly at heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls." All His tiredness was forgotten, all His longing for rest and recreation was blown to the winds, even the sad thought concerning the death of John was temporarily relegated to the background. For the present, He saw only one thing, the need of the people, and was only concerned about one task, that of supplying their urgent need.

Here you get an insight into the true nature of our Savior. You may remember how at times your mother was so sick, so weak and tired, that she could hardly straighten up, but still did not think of herself and lie down to rest until she had put the dinner on the table for you. Children, this is but a very imperfect image of the self-denying love which Jesus has in His heart for all His own, including you. Oh, what a Friend we have in Jesus! What a wonderful Savior He is! What a privilege it is to be a sheep of His pasture!

After Jesus had preached for a while, He got up and walked about among the people, laying His hands upon the sick and healing them. He did not allow Himself to grow weary, He remained on the alert constantly and tenderly cared for His poor people, so that they might for once in their life find out what it is to have a good and faithful Shepherd. Again, when there was a pause in His preaching, the people came to the front and talked to Him about the affairs of their souls, about their cares and doubts, and asked for His advice. He listened to their tale of woe most patiently, and advised and comforted them in a way all His own. He had time for each one that came to Him, and gave him His full attention. When a child persists in bombarding its

father with all kinds of questions, he finally grows indifferent and hears only half of what it says to him; Jesus was not like such a father. No matter how many came to Him with their troubles, He listened as attentively to the last as to the first, and the help that He lent at the beginning was as thorough as that which He rendered at the end of His dealing with those who sought His help and advice. From such individual work, Jesus would return to the people as a whole. Not a single one was to go home empty. He wanted to reach them all. Whoever hungered and thirsted after righteousness, was to be filled.

Throughout the day Jesus had thus served the people. Meanwhile evening had come, but Jesus kept right on shepherding the people. It seemed as if He had entirely forgotten how far they were away from Bethsaida and the other neighboring towns, as if His care for the spiritual hunger of the peoples' souls had made Him overlook their bodily hunger. His disciples finally thought it necessary to call His attention to this matter. They came to Him and said, "Master, this is a desert place, and now the time is far passed; send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread, for they have nothing to eat." It was no easy task to feed such a multitude, so that the disciples considered it a wise plan to have the people form different groups and get their food-supply from the various villages and rural districts in the neighborhood. For if they had all gone to one and the same city, they could have consumed all the food in the hotels and restaurants, and still gone away hungry. If thousands of people should come to our city unexpectedly, we would have some difficulty in feeding them all, and yet Dubuque is a large place. Those people about whom the disciples were concerned would have been content with very simple food, and would not have asked for too much of it; but even so it was not an easy matter to provision them. Jesus appeared

to be altogether unaware of this difficulty. He said to the disciples, "Give **ye** them to eat." The disciples could not understand how it was possible for Him to talk like that. They, the disciples, who themselves had little or nothing, were told to feed a crowd of thousands of people! Jesus, however, pretended not to see the look of wonder which they gave Him. He simply went on to say to Philip in particular, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" But this question sounded as if Jesus Himself had now begun to see what difficulties were in the way of feeding these hungry masses. It seemed as if He wanted to ask Philip for advice in regard to a possible solution of these difficulties. And yet, there was a touch of humor in the tone of His voice; for He Himself knew well enough what He intended to do. Philip did not notice this; he failed to see that with His question Jesus simply wanted to test him and make it apparent how much he had thus far learned in His Master's school. He had indeed not yet learned the most important lesson, namely, full and unconditional trust in His Master. For otherwise he would have said to Jesus, "Master, I do not know whence we shall take bread to feed these multitudes; but **Thou** knowest it; for Thou hast never yet shown Thyself unable to lend counsel and help in any difficult situation. But a short time ago we heard Thee say in Thy sermon on the Mount, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' These people have sought the kingdom of God and staid with Thee all day until evening, so Thou must make good Thy word and see to it that they shall not go away unfed." Instead of giving vent to such words of faith, Philip strained his mind in trying to figure out what amount of money would be needed to buy bread enough for the occasion. But his multiplying and dividing did not help him much in solving the problem that confronted them. For after some moments of intense reflection He said to Jesus, "Even if we were

to send messengers into the villages round about, and have them hurriedly buy two hundred pennies' worth of bread, it would not be sufficient for them, though each one should take but a little." The 200 pennies of which Philip spoke were an amount which a man could not have earned in less than 200 days; for a penny a day was the usual wage of a day laborer. Jesus and, His disciples did not have that amount in their treasury. But supposing that their treasury had contained that much, it would have been altogether impossible to buy enough bread with it for thousands of people. So even if he assumed the most favorable conditions, Philip was at the end of his rope. He had not taken into consideration that to the 200 pennies he could have added the omnipotence of Jesus. In fact, this was something that he still had to learn. Jesus now turned again to all of His disciples and asked them, "How many loaves have ye?" Andrew soon had a reply in readiness. Evidently He had been making inquiries among the people in regard to any supply of food some of their number might have brought with them. In this way he had gained the information that there was a lad near by who had five barley loaves and two small fried or baked fish. This information he imparted to Jesus, but immediately showed his embarrassment by adding, "However, what are these few loaves and fishes among so many?"

There was One, however, to whom this food-supply did not seem too small. He was abundantly able to multiply it. Without stopping to set Philip and Andrew right, He said to all of His disciples, "Make the men sit down." The disciples therefore went among the people and requested them to be seated in ranks by hundreds and by fifties. In this way it was to be made easy to reach all of them, and to avoid the danger of missing anyone. The people gladly complied with this request, because they felt that something extraordinary was going to take place, and, besides, there was plenty of soft grass upon which they could comfortably

recline. When all had taken their places in good order, Jesus said to His disciples, "Bring hither the five loaves and the two fishes." So they brought them to Him. When He took them into His hands, the eyes of all were fixed upon Him in a way not quite unlike the way in which you regard your mother when she is about to distribute bread at the table. And yet, they looked at Him in a somewhat different manner. Their looks betrayed curiosity, wonder, and something else that we may call a vague expectation of what was to follow. Jesus did not allow Himself to be disturbed by the consciousness of having all these eyes directed toward Him. In a spirit of deep devotion He looked up to heaven, and, mark what I say, offered a prayer to His heavenly Father, thanking Him for the food which He held in His hands. It was not too small an amount to make Him feel grateful, and He spoke to His heavenly Father in the presence of these thousands as if He had been all alone with Him. Then He took the loaves and broke them. And, behold, as He broke the loaves, one after the other, and gave the pieces to His disciples, the supply did not become exhausted, but ever renewed itself, so that He could keep right on handing it to the disciples and through them to the people. He did the same thing with the two fishes. So the people were all amply supplied. Owing to the good order which prevailed, no one was overlooked, no one went away hungry. Jesus so blessed the bread and the fishes that they could all eat until they were well satiated. Look, here in our picture a woman seated on the grass is just receiving her portion. The other woman, with her little child at her side, stretches out her hand, as if she wanted to say, "Do not forget me and my little child, please." And her turn will come next, to be sure. The aged man in the corner is already eating of the bread and fish that he has lying in his lap. The other groups are likewise being served. All receive their portion, and have their hunger satisfied. Yes, they even left over

a lot of fragments, so that Jesus could say to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments which are left, that nothing may be lost." The bread was especially precious for having been supplied to the people in such a wonderful way, that it would have been doubly wicked to let any of it go to waste. So the disciples gathered up the fragments that were left, and, think of it, there were twelve basketfuls of them. That was much more than had been on hand at the beginning of the meal. And yet, when they counted the fifties and hundreds that were reclining on the grass, they found that fully five thousand people had eaten and were well satiated.

Oh, what a great miracle, and what a wonderful Savior to perform it! He feeds the hungry souls with His divine word, and the hungry bodies with bread. He is a Savior who supplies **all** wants. We can understand why the people on that occasion said to one another, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world, this is indeed the promised Savior." When not a few of them thought of taking him at once and making Him king, they showed indeed that they had not understood the mind of Jesus, and that they had not gone beyond the purely external. Jesus had no ambition to become a worldly king, but wanted to rule as king in their hearts, so that they might regard Him as their only Lord, obey His will, and thus find true happiness. All the miracles which Jesus performed, including the one that we have considered today, had for their aim and purpose the winning of the people's hearts. Therefore, when He noticed that in the present instance He had not accomplished His main purpose, He withdrew from the multitude, and went to a quiet place higher up in the mountain, where He could be all alone with His heavenly Father and tell Him in a plaintive prayer how the people closed their hearts to Him.

Do we also want to close our hearts to Jesus? Have we not followed Him today for the very purpose of letting Him gain more complete possession of our hearts, and learning to

love Him more and more? Let us, therefore, receive Him into our hearts, and have the firm confidence in Him that He will also supply us with all that we need in the way of food for soul and body. If we firmly believe in Him as our Savior, we will not be apt to ask, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewith shall we be clothed?" On the contrary, we will cast all our fears and cares on Him, and let Him care for us. Of course, He will not have occasion to provide for us in such a striking way as He provided for the multitude there in the wilderness. That is not necessary either. But He will supply us with grain, from which flour and bread are gained, and furnish us meat, as well as other things that we like to eat along with our bread. "He richly giveth food to His creatures here, fills all that liveth e'er with content and cheer; both late and early rain He sendeth, choicest of blessings He daily lendeth." Should we not, therefore, love Him to whom we only need to lift up our eyes, in order to receive our meat in due season? Should we not gladly say grace at the table, and call to one another, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever?" "But if ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." So, children, let us cast all cares upon Jesus, since He cares for us, and let us be concerned only about one thing, namely, that we may please Him more and more, and be His disciples indeed. To this may our dear Savior Himself help us by His grace.

14. How Jesus Healed the Palsied Man Both in Body and Soul.

The story for the present Sunday takes us to Capernaum. In spirit we have often been there before. It was right near Capernaum that Peter, upon the Lord's request, let down the net and caught such a multitude of fishes. From Capernaum Jesus and His disciples started out to cross the sea on that

particular evening, when they were overtaken by a terrific storm. Capernaum also was the place where, according to our last story, Jesus entered the ship with His disciples and withdrew to the desert place on the opposite side of Lake Gennesaret, in order that they might rest a while. The city of Capernaum was most intimately connected with the life of our Savior during the time of His puplic ministry. Soon after He had begun His work as Savior, He moved from Nazareth to Capernaum, taking His mother with Him. In Capernaum He then spent the greater part of His time, for which reason it was called "His" city. As you already know, Capernaum was situated on Lake Gennesaret, about three miles west or southwest of the place where the Jordan, coming from the north, flows into that beautiful lake. Right through the city of Capernaum led that great mercantile highway which extended from Akko on the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River. On this route was the city of Damascus. From there it ran in a southern direction as far as Capernaum on Lake Gennesaret. Here it separated into two branches, one of which ran in a western direction, past Nazareth, down to the Mediterranean Sea; the other in a southern direction, through Jerusalem, down to Egypt (map!). On account of its favorable location, Jesus was induced to make Capernaum "His" city during the years of His public ministry. It was built right beside Lake Gennesaret, at and on whose waters the people used to gather in great numbers, affording Jesus an opportunity to come in contact with them; reports of His work in Capernaum were carried everywhere by the crowds that passed through the city on their way to and from the great Jewish festivals in Jerusalem; and here in Capernaum Peter and Andrew, perhaps also James and John, had their home. Originally, Capernaum was only a little village inhabited almost exclusively by fishermen, for whom the location of the place was most convenient, but when the Jews were placed under the rule of the Roman government, it developed

into a regular city. Because of its importance as a town on the great mercantile highway, which from there branched out in three different directions, the Roman emperor placed a company of soldiers there, as well as a centurian or captain who had them in charge. He also had toll-booths erected in Capernaum, and, through officers known to us as publicans, collected toll for the Roman government from all the merchants that passed through the city with their wares, on their way either to Jerusalem and Egypt or to Akko on the Mediterranean Sea. Matthew, who later became one of the Lord's apostles, had such a toll-booth under his management in the city of Capernaum, and was one of the officers who were called publicans. Officers of the tetrarch Herod Antipas also resided in that city on the lake. Capernaum had an especially fine synagogue, which the Jews owed to the generosity of the Roman centurian, since he had caused it to be built for them (Luke 7, 5; Matth. 8, 5 ff.). Later it seems to have been buried under the debris caused by an earthquake, but a few years ago it was excavated, and the ancient pillars upon which it stood are still in fairly good condition, so that from their shape and ornamentations we can gain some idea as to how the synagogue looked. Into this ancient city of Capernaum, then, I want to lead you today, as I relate to you **how Jesus there healed the palsied man both in body and soul.**

One day, I do not know exactly on which one, a small sail-boat, coming from the eastern shore of Lake Gennesaret, landed in Capernaum. That was nothing unusual; for boats could be seen on the lake at almost any time, sailing in all directions, and not a few of them would be headed toward the city of Capernaum, where their occupants disembarked and wended their way through the busy streets. But when we look more closely at the boat that just now is being moored at the wharf, we can not help thinking that it is the same one in which Jesus and His disciples had been out on the sea many times before. And, sure enough, it is

they whom we see leaving the boat. Followed by His disciples, Jesus directs His steps toward a house situated in that part of the city which was mainly occupied by fishermen, including Peter, the prôbable owner of the house. Like all the houses of the common Jewish people at that time, it stood in the middle of a yard which was enclosed by a high wall built of clay. With Jesus, we pass through the gate leading into the yard. There we see a large clay stove used for cooking. Several chairs and a table are also in evidence. One can tell that this yard is the place where the members of the family, when at home, spend nearly the whole day, it being to them what our sitting room is to us. Farther back, there is a chicken-coop and a pigeon-house. In the middle of the yard a building is seen in which the family resides. It consists of four walls made of clay brick or ordinary unhewn stones; one can not tell which, since both the walls and the roof have been thickly coated with mortar made of clay and straw, which gives the whole building a yellowish gray appearance. Instead of a door, the house only has a low opening that serves as a place of entrance. Along the top of the walls there are several smaller openings that let in light and air, but are not covered with panes of glass, like our modern windows. With Jesus, we pass through the doorless opening and enter into the interior of the house. It is divided off into two parts, the one being somewhat lower down than the other. In the lower part are kept all kinds of implements used for work in the garden or for fishing purposes. Here also domestic animals find shelter when the weather does not permit their remaining out in the fields. The higher space is occupied by the family during bad weather and at night. It is a very primitive room, without a plastered ceiling, so that one looks right through to the roof overhead. This is constructed of rough beams reaching straight across from one wall to the other. The beams are covered with the branches and twigs of trees, and

also with a layer of earth about one foot thick. Even before entering we noticed that the roof was not slanting but flat, like those of our stores and factories. We also took notice of a flight of stairs leading to the top of the house from the outside. It was a house of this type that Jesus entered. To us it may seem rather queer and uninviting when we compare it with our own houses, but it did not seem so to Jesus, for He had been used to such houses from childhood up. The houses of the common people in the Jewish land were all built in this style, and when Jesus still lived in Nazareth He Himself had put up just such houses, as we may infer from the fact that He, like His foster-father Joseph, was a carpenter, or rather a contractor, whom the people engaged to build houses for them.

Not long after Jesus had entered the house that we have in mind, people came to it from all directions. It was a sight to behold, not unlike the one that greets our eyes on Sunday morning, when the church bells ring and the people hurry to the services. The report that Jesus had returned to the city was sufficient to coax many away from their yards and from their work, in order to look up Jesus and hear Him preach. And how the report did circulate! It was passed on from neighbor to neighbor, from one interested person to another, until the city was full of it. The house-wife now left her washtub, the mason his tools, the fisher his net, the weaver his yarn, the publican his toll-booth, the ruler of the synagogue his scrolls, the clerks their office, and went to the house which Jesus had entered shortly before. Soon the interior of the house was filled with people, first the higher and then the lower room. After a while the yard also was packed to its utmost capacity, but still new crowds were arriving, and taking their places outside of the wall by which the yard was enclosed. Jesus knew why these people had come, and so He began to preach to them. He was inside of the house, but since the windows

were not closed with glass, and the door was only an open space, He could also be heard and understood by those who were outside. By the expression of their faces you could tell that many were hungry for the words of life that flowed from the Savior's lips, while others only seemed to have come for the purpose of satisfying their curiosity, because Jesus had the reputation of being a powerful speaker, quite superior to their ordinary teachers and preachers. Among the crowds there were also a number of very peculiar people, called scribes and Pharisees. They belonged to the leaders of the common people, and were highly respected by them. They were chiefly at home in Jerusalem and in other cities of Judaea (map!), but some of them could also be found in the cities of Galilee, including Capernaum. They thought that they were the only ones who understood the Scriptures and could teach people the way to eternal life, that they alone could tell anyone whether or not he was on the right road to heaven. Those who obeyed the law of Moses, as interpreted by them, were regarded as being on the right track, but no one else. Besides, they demanded obedience also to their own statutes, which were not contained in the Mosaic law. Thus they placed a heavy, unbearable yoke upon the necks of the people. These scribes and Pharisees had from the very beginning regarded Jesus with suspicious eyes, since He did not belong to their caste. And now that He preached so entirely differently than they, now that the people all flocked to hear Him, even following Him into the wilderness, they were seized with envy and looked upon Jesus as their enemy, whom they would have to silence, the sooner the better. Their enmity toward Him grew very intense when He openly told them the truth and exposed them as hypocrites, who hid their inner wickedness by a mere outward fulfillment of the law. Of these fellows there were quite a number among the people who came to Jesus. They pushed themselves well to the front, so that they might stand right

near Jesus and hear every word that He spoke. But you must not think that they did this because they wanted to learn of Jesus the right way to heaven. No, how they might be saved by Him, was not what They were anxious to find out. Their only intention was to detect in the sermons of Jesus some objectionable statement, on account of which they might brand Him as a false prophet, who should be compelled to stop teaching the people, or even put out of the world entirely.

Jesus saw how they watched Him, but He was not afraid of them. He never had the slightest fear in the presence of His enemies. He looked straight into their eyes, and was perfectly free in His utterances, since He had nothing to conceal. He would have liked nothing better than to put the right kind of thoughts into their hearts, and get them to accept Him as their Savior. But if they stubbornly refused to open their hearts to His preaching, there were plenty of others present who took pleasure in hearing Him, and some of whom had a real longing to obtain forgiveness of sin, to be saved from their lost condition, and to inherit eternal life. In their hearts they were grateful for what He taught them. This Jesus knew, and so He preached to them with a feeling of satisfaction, in spite of the unappreciative, hostile scribes and Pharisees, who were but trying to detect some flaw in His teachings. He did not allow Himself to grow weary of preaching, but improved His opportunity as fully as possible. The great theme of His sermon was again the sinfulness of man and the pardoning grace of God. He spoke of God as the holy One, before whom no sinner can stand, whose holiness would compel Him to punish sinful man and banish Him from His presence forever; but He also pictured God as being gracious and plenteous in mercy, as being the heavenly Father who, prompted by His infinite love, sent His Son into the world to be the Savior of sinful man, to rescue him from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil.

He declared that whoever believed in Him, the Son of God, would receive forgiveness from His heavenly Father, and be accepted by Him as His child and as an heir of eternal life. In this strain Jesus talked to the crowds that had gathered around Him inside and outside of the house.

It was a sermon that widely differed from those which the people had heard from the scribes and the Pharisees. It was the Gospel in all its truth and purity. It was glad tidings to all those who felt troubled on account of their sin. No wonder they listened to Him so willingly and with such good attention. But while Jesus was right in the midst of His sermon there was a sudden disturbance. It was of a very peculiar nature. Right above Jesus the roof was opened from the outside and four men, by means of ropes, let down a bed through the opening. It was a sort of stretcher, and upon it lay a man sick of the palsy. The men let the bed down in such a way that the sick man came to be right in front of Jesus. That was indeed a very peculiar interruption.

How did it happen that the palsied man was brought to Jesus in this unusual way? Let us hear the facts in the case.

In Capernaum a certain man had for some time been confined to his bed by a very grave sickness. He was palsied, that is, he had suffered a stroke of paralysis, and a part of his body had thus become lamed, so that he could not get up and walk around, but had to stay right where he was laid by those who waited on him. If such a thing happens to a very old man, it is still bad enough, but it is doubly hard for a young man to be afflicted in this way. He can hardly stand it to remain in bed when he would like to be up and around, active and at his work, like other men of his years. We do not know how long this man had been afflicted with his lameness, nor are we able to say why he had not been taken to Jesus sooner, in order to be made well. Information regarding these points would not add anything of importance to our story anyway. Suffice it, therefore, to be informed that

on the day when Jesus had once again returned to Capernaum and was preaching in the house with which we are already familiar, he had asked four men, who interested themselves in his behalf, to take him to Jesus. They consented to do so. After they had talked the matter over, they decided to carry him to Jesus without picking him up out of his bed. So they gently lifted up the bed upon which the palsied man lay, carried it out of the house, and through the streets of the city, unmindful of the attention which they attracted, until they should reach their destination. The sick man was firmly convinced that Jesus would restore him to health, and the four men who carried him were equally sure of it. They knew that He had never yet cast out anyone who came to Him for help.

But, dear me! when these four men, with the sick one, came to the house in which Jesus was preaching, the house, and even the yard, was already packed with people. They stood as closely together as they could, so that they formed one solid mass. What were the men to do with their patient? They tried to work their way through the crowd, in spite of its density, but their efforts proved futile. The crowd did not seem to have much sympathy for the poor sick man either, or it would have tried to make room for him in some way or other. Then the men who were carrying him may have thought of giving up all further attempts at laying him before Jesus, and taking the patient back to his old place of misery. But the poor fellow appealed to them most pitifully. He thought, "Who knows when I will be able again to secure men who will carry me to the Savior, the only One in the whole world from whom I can expect help?" The carriers could not well resist his appeal. They gave up the idea of taking the sick man back to his home, and began to search for some means of reaching Jesus in spite of the crowds that surrounded Him. Suddenly one of them said, "I have a suggestion to offer. If we try hard,

we may be able to make our way through the crowds as far as to the side of the house. Once there, we can carry our patient up the stairs that lead to the roof of the house, make an opening through the roof, and let him down before Jesus." The others were willing to act upon this suggestion. Of course, it would cost them a lot of work and trouble, but they were willing to put forth their best efforts, if they could only accomplish their purpose; for they had not the slightest doubt that Jesus would help the sick man, provided they could reach Him. Even the thought that the house did not belong to them and they really had no right to effect an opening through its roof could not hinder them from going ahead with the execution of their plan. They felt that any damage done to the house could easily be repaired afterwards. So they picked up the bed with the sick man, worked their way through the crowd as best they could, managed to squeeze through the gate into the yard, and finally reached the stairs that led to the top of the house. With no little effort they carried the sick man with his bed up the stairs and safely got him to the roof. There they placed the bed somewhat to the side, and then put themselves to the task of making a spacious opening through the flat house-top. This was not too difficult a matter, since they only had to dig through a layer of earth which was about one foot thick, take up a few beams and branches, and the opening would be made. Perhaps much of the earth had been washed away during the rainy season, and the roof had not yet been repaired; for such a condition of the roof is nothing uncommon in those regions even today. In this case, to open the roof was a comparatively easy job. Glad to have effected the opening, the men now secured two ropes, placed the bed with the sick man upon them, took hold of the ropes and slowly let the bed down through the opening, until it stood right before Jesus. He had noticed them working overhead, but they made very little noise, and He did not allow Himself to be disturbed in

His discourse. He had pretended to be indifferent to them, in order that the greatness and strength of their faith in Him might become all the more apparent in the presence of the people. For both the sick man and those who carried him must have firmly believed that Jesus would restore him to health, or they would not have gone to all that trouble.

Now, however, since they had shown their perfect faith in Him, and since the poor man with all his misery was lying right at His feet, what else could Jesus do but lend the help they so confidently expected of Him, and make the sick man well? The disciples of Jesus, and others who stood about, must indeed have been of this opinion. But instead of healing the sick man, Jesus said to him, "Take courage, be of good cheer, my son; thy sins are forgiven thee." Jesus speaks of the poor man's sins, and not a word does He say about his sickness. Was it not hard and cruel of Jesus, in view of the utter wretchedness of the sick man, whose very eyes pleaded for bodily relief, to refer only to his sins, and not to mention the help that he craved for his sick body with so much as a single syllable? Could Jesus not have healed the man first and then comforted him on account of his sins, if he stood in need of such comfort? We might feel disposed to say this by way of criticism; for bodily ailments are likely to be regarded by us as being of greater seriousness than the sickness of the soul that we call sin. We so easily forget that sin is the most serious thing in the world. And yet, such is the case; for sin brings upon us the wrath and judgments of God, than which there is nothing worse. Even the hardest is easier to bear than this. The greatest of evils is guilt, and guilt results from sin. Jesus knew this, and for this reason He first spoke of sin, the sickness of the soul. If He could cure the poor fellow's soul-sickness, He was lending the help that he most needed. I am sure the sick man himself realized this. When all of a sudden He was brought face to face with Jesus, the holy and righteous, he

was impressed somewhat like Peter after that wonderful draught of fishes. He could not help thinking of his sins, and the thought of them burdened his conscience. They robbed him of all courage to hope for help from Jesus. While he still had faith in the power of Jesus to restore sick people to health, he suddenly had his doubts as to whether Jesus would use this power to heal him, seeing that he was such a great sinner. Your father may be able to buy you a new suit in case that you have torn your old one; but will he do it if he finds out that you tore the old one wilfully? Can you have the same courage, the same confidence to ask him for a new suit of clothes if it is your own fault that the one you have on is not fit to be worn any more? The man sick of the palsy was much in the same condition when he came to lie right before Jesus. The thought of his own sin instantly robbed him of all courage to hope for Jesus' help. Jesus knew this, being able to look right into one's heart, and I imagine He could also read it in the expression of the poor fellow's eyes. That is why He said to him, "Take courage, my son; be of good cheer, my son" And when He went on to speak of his sins, the sick man was not surprised in the least; on the contrary, he agreed with Jesus, and looked as if he felt like saying, "Thou art right, what bothers me more than my sickness and takes away all my courage is the thought of my sins." But how his heart must have leaped for joy when Jesus continued in His address, saying, **"Thy sins are forgiven thee!"** That was a message greater and more precious than anything he could have heard. To have forgiveness of sin, was his first and foremost need.

Having had his sins forgiven, he again felt encouraged to hope for his restoration to bodily health; he also had strength to wait for this great gift until Jesus presented it to him; in the deepest sense, he was already rescued, and it mattered comparatively little if he had to remain afflicted with bodily illness to the very end of his life; for being again assured

of God's pardoning grace, one is abundantly able to bear even the most serious bodily affliction, since God Himself helps him bear it. The sick man, having obtained forgiveness of sin, was in a mood to sing and say, "My heart for joy is leaping, and can not mournful be; I stop my bitter weeping, feel naught but joy and glee. For Christ, the Sun of gladness, now dwells within my soul, there to dispell all sadness, and heaven is my goal." This Jesus was indeed greater than the man sick of the palsy had believed Him to be. How close was His relation to God if He could even forgive sin!

While the palsied man thus became overjoyed when he heard Jesus say to Him, "Be of good cheer, son; thy sins are forgiven thee," these very same words startled the scribes and Pharisees who were present on that occasion. This is well illustrated in our picture. One of them lifts up his arm as if to say, "This Jesus is One whom God in heaven will have to punish; for with the words that we have just heard out of His mouth He has blasphemed God; He has undertaken to do that which God alone can do; no one is able to forgive sin save God only." The other one has already turned away from Jesus, as if he thought it a dangerous thing to stand beside such a sinner. The third one looks as if he were thinking, "Aha! now we have entrapped Thee! Now we can have Thee arrested and put out of the way as a blasphemer." One can just see how his face beams at the very thought of it. If they however had been of the opinion that Jesus did not know what they were thinking within their hearts, they were soon to discover their mistake. Jesus almost immediately turned toward them, looked straight into their eyes, and said, "Why do you think such wicked thoughts in your hearts? Why do you take Me for a blasphemer because I have said to this poor man, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee?' You are of the opinion that I have neither power nor authority to forgive sins, and that my words to this poor man are nothing but words, that they have not

really imparted anything to the one for whose benefit they were spoken. Now, please tell me which is easier, to say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee' or to say, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and walk'? You probably think it easier to say the former, because no one can see whether one's sins are thereby really forgiven, while anybody could see with his eyes whether at the second word the sick person would get up and walk, or not. I do not care to dispute this question with you now; but one thing you must admit: He who can do the latter, is also able to do the former; one who by his word can make a lame man walk has power also by his word to forgive him his sins. Were such a one not more than mere man, he could not by his word heal a palsied person; if, however, he is more than man, then he can forgive sin. Now, in order that you may plainly see that I have a right to forgive sin here on earth, I will say to this palsied man, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thy house.' If upon my word he arises, I will have proved to you that I can also forgive him his sins." And without waiting for a reply from the scribes and Pharisees, He said to the palsied man, "Arise, take thy bed, and go to thy house." No sooner had Jesus said this, however, than the sick man arose, stood erect on his feet, took up his bed, and carried it home; by the word of Jesus he had been made entirely well. What had Jesus thus proved? He had proved that He is more than mere man and that He therefore has power to forgive sin, that, consequently, one's sins are actually forgiven when He says so. The scribes and Pharisees were thus silenced, and could not sustain their charge that He had spoken blasphemy. The other people, who stood by and witnessed all this, were amazed and glorified God for giving such power to man. They sang God's praises because He had given to One who stood before them in human form power by His word to restore people to bodily health, and also to heal their sin-sick souls through the forgiveness of their sins.

It was indeed a great power that Jesus possessed and

made manifest. Had He been mere man, He would not have possessed such power. Children, it is surely something great that we have seen in Jesus do today. We know now that He can heal the sick by merely giving expression to His will. Therefore, when your father, mother, sister or brother is taken sick, remember that Jesus can effect their cure, and ask Him in prayer to restore your dear ones to health. The doctor can not help anyone without the will and consent of the Lord. But do not forget this: worse by far than bodily sickness is sin, the sickness of the soul. Bodily illness can only take us to the grave, while sin brings upon us the wrath and judgments of God both in time and in eternity. The fact that the Savior can restore the sick body to physical health is not nearly of such great importance as the other fact that He can restore the sin-sick soul by the forgivenes of sin. There is nothing greater that we can receive here on earth. To some extent, even the smallest ones among you are able to understand this. Do you remember how unhappy you were when you had done something against the will of your parents, something that was wrong and naughty? Your heart thumped because you had a guilty conscience, and you were unable to let your own eyes meet those of your parents. It was sin that caused you all this uneasiness. Once a boy had stolen something, and then he denied it to his parents. But his lie did not make him happy; on the contrary, he grew shy of his parents, always went out of their way, and when he sat at the table with them, he avoided meeting their eyes. The boy was unhappy. Sin had made him so. Again, there was a girl who had lied to her father. The matter rested thus for several days, and one could see that something was wrong with her. But then she came to her father and said to him, "Father, I lied to you the other day; please forgive me!" Her father looked very sober and told her in an earnest way how sinful it is to tell lies; but then he assured her of his hearty forgiveness, and from that time father and daughter

loved each other all the more. The girl was happy because her sin had been forgiven. When we commit sin, however, we do not only offend men, but also God. What, therefore, can be of greater importance to us than to know that through Jesus God grants us remission of sin? All that we need to do is to come to Him and ask His pardon. For this reason, children, the story of the palsied man is one of my favorite stories; it tells me that I also may come to my Savior and have Him forgive me all my sins. In this way, the sunshine of joy and peace comes into my heart. Does not the Savior also grow increasingly precious to you as you are made aware of the great truth that from Him you may obtain the most important and precious thing on earth, even the forgiveness of your sins?

"Jesus sinners doth receive:
Word of surest consolation,
Word all sorrow to relieve,
Word of pardon, peace, salvation!
Naught like this can comfort give:
Jesus sinners doth receive."

15. How Jesus Comforted a Sorrowing Father by Restoring His Deceased Daughter to Life.

Once more we must direct out footsteps toward Capernaum, that city on Lake Gennesaret in which Jesus so often preached and performed so many signs and wonders, toward the city of Capernaum, often called "His" city. There we shall have occasion to see additional rays of our Savior's divine glory shine forth. This time, however, we are not to enter the home of a poor fisherman, but that of one who stood somewhat higher in a social way, inasmuch as he was the ruler of the synagogue at Capernaum. You have not yet forgotten that the synagogues of the Jews were buildings in which they congregated every Sabbath or Saturday to have public divine service. You may also remember from last

Sunday that the Roman centurian who had been stationed at Capernaum had a fine synagogue built for them in that city, because he was interested in their religion. A few years ago this synagogue, which had been hidden under debris probably caused by an earthquake, was laid bare, so that we know exactly how it looked.* It must have been a very beautiful synagogue. The Roman centurian had spared no money in having it erected. Every synagogue was under the care of a ruler. He had to see to it that order was upheld during the service. Most likely he also translated the passages that were read from the Hebrew text of the Old Testament into the Arameic, spoken by the common people in Christ's time. It

* E. Rippmann, who visited Capernaum since the excavation of this synagogue, describes it thus: "It was built of yellow, marble-like limestone. On the south there were three flights of stairs, and each of these had four steps upon which one ascended, to gain entrance to the interior. The latter was 35 paces in length and 25 in width. Corinthian pillars at the south end and at the two sides supported the gallery for women. Corresponding to these fully rounded pillars there were others built into the wall in such a way as to protrude both on the inside and on the outside of the building. The double pillars at the corners were heart-shaped. The bases of the pillars are still intact; they are about one step higher than the main auditorium. The back part of the building, constituting the last quarter, was somewhat elevated, and upon it stood the pulpit of the rabbi. In the plain back wall there was a richly ornamented niche containing the holy book of the law. Highly ornamented architraves supported the flat roof. On the west side there was a small addition to the main building. It is rather surprising that practically nothing of the ruins has been carried away; very likely the building was destroyed and buried by an earthquake. The Jewish plan of the synagogue and the Greek-Roman style of architecture warrant the conclusion that this was the very synagogue which the Roman centurian had built for the Jews. And if this be true, then these steps are the ones upon which Jesus walked when He entered the synagogue. It is, then, at the same time, the only place which has been preserved to us without change since His time, thanks to its having been covered up so securely until recently excavated".

is, besides, highly probable that the ruler often delivered the discourse which usually followed the reading, as a sort of sermon. Now, the ruler of the synagogue at Capernaum was a man named Jairus. Since he, at the same time, belonged to the city council, he was one of the most highly respected men in the city. It is, then, his house that we enter today, as we proceed to consider **how Jesus comforted a sorrowing father by restoring his deceased daughter to life.**

The sunshine of the house in which Jairus lived was his little daughter. As she grew up, she more and more came to be the joy of her parents. She was now twelve years old, and her parents regarded her with secret pride. Whenever they had a little spare time, they gave her their fond attention, while she took pleasure in running on errands for her father and helping her mother with the housework. She was also liked by her neighbors and playmates; her bright face, her happy eyes and her willing hands won for her the love and friendship of all.

Then it happened that a dark cloud made its appearance and threatened to drive the sunshine out of Jairus' house; the little girl became very ill and had to be taken to bed. I am not able to say just what ailed her, but her sickness was of a very grave nature and caused her parents no little anxiety. They probably sent for the doctor, but his medicine did not do the sick girl any good. Her face grew thinner from day to day, and her hands began to look very pale and transparent, and her eyes had such a sad expression and were so far back in their sockets. O how this grieved her parents! Were they to lose their darling, the joy and sunshine of their house, would their child really have to die and be buried in the cold, dark grave? They simply could not conceive of such a thing, and did their utmost to bring about a change for the better in the condition of their girl. The mother staid with her daughter day and night, and her father also spent

every spare moment at her bedside. But did not Jairus live in Capernaum where Jesus was at home? Why did he not get Him to heal his daughter? Could not He who healed the palsied man and so many others in that city also restore the daughter of Jairus to health? Such thoughts, children, may already have arisen in your minds, and I would not blame you if that were really the case. But remember that Jairus was one of the most distinguished men in Capernaum, a man who ruled the synagogue and by virtue of his office frequently came in contact with the scribes and Pharisees, who, as we know from the story of the palsied man, had come to be the most embittered enemies of Jesus and did not want to have anything to do with Him. They told the people of the city to keep away from this Jesus of Nazareth, maintaining that He was not the Savior at all, for whose coming they had waited, but a liar and a deceiver, claiming to be more than He was, yea, a blasphemer. With these scribes and Pharisees Jairus, as a ruler of the synagogue, had to keep up close relations. And what would they have said if Jairus all at once had gone to Jesus and asked Him to come to his house? Jairus thought of this, and it kept him from going to Jesus. Suddenly, however, the condition of his little daughter grew much worse; it became evident that ordinary doctors could not help her any more; whoever was to lend her help had to be more than mere man. Her father and mother looked at each other with very sad eyes, and the look of the mother, at the same time, contained a plea; they said as plainly as it could have been expressed in words, "Wilt thou not after all go and get Jesus? The life of our child is at stake". Jairus understood the look; several times the same thought had occurred to him, only he had not yet come to a decision. But now he extended his hand to his wife and said to her, "Yes, I will go to Jesus; let the Pharisees say what they please". And immediately he started out of the door, because there was no time to be lost.

It did not take him long to find Jesus. He had just been dining with Matthew, the publican, and was now standing outside, answering questions which had been put to Him. As usual, He was surrounded by a crowd of people. As soon as Jairus saw Him, he fell down at His feet, embraced His knees with his trembling arms and said to Him in the most pleading voice, "My little daughter is sick, and at the point of death; I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be made whole and live". He paid no attention to the people who were standing about and saw what he was doing; he did not mind the dusty street in the middle of which he had thrown himself at the feet of Jesus; he was not intimidated by the presence of the scribes and Pharisees in the crowd. Just now, only one thought filled his heart; he wanted to induce Jesus to come down to his house as quickly as possible and restore his daughter before it was too late.

What will Jesus do? He could have ordered Jairus away, saying to him, "Indeed, at the moment of the most extreme danger, I seem to be good enough to come to thy house. Heretofore thou wast the proud ruler of the synagogue, deeming thyself too good to come in contact with Me; then thou wast the righteous and holy one, and I the sinner and blasphemer; and now I am to help thee. Get thee hence! If I was not good enough to come near thee then, thou canst not expect Me to come into thy house now and help thy daughter". Yes, children, it is human nature to think and talk in this strain. We are always disposed to treat others as they treat us. But such is not the case with Jesus. He does not return evil for evil, nor railing for railing. His is a forgiving spirit; He has a heart filled with compassion and sympathy. Never yet has He cast out anyone who came to Him with an humble plea for help. So He was not going to put Jairus in mind now of his former aloofness; He was altogether willing to forget the past of this man, and to deal with him according to his present need. He was aware of the inner

struggle through which Jairus had passed until he came to a decision relatively to his calling upon Him for help; He knew how to appreciate what the ruler of the synagogue had done just this moment by throwing himself at the feet of Jesus. Rejoicing in the change of the man's attitude toward Him, He bade him rise and at once started out with him on the way to his house. That is the kind of Savior we have in Jesus; He is near unto all those who call upon Him with earnestness.

How happy Jairus was now! Jesus was going with him, as the Physician of his little daughter. Oh, if He went with him, the restoration of the patient was assured; Jesus would be equal to the task of making her well. The face of Jairus was radiant with gratitude and reflected happiness in spite of his trouble. How fortunate it was that he had summoned up courage enough to go to Jesus! In imagination he already saw his daughter sit beside him, well and hardy once more. Thus Jairus believed in the Lord, thus he trusted in Him.

While they were on the way, Jesus did something which tended to strengthen the faith of Jairus in Him, although at first his patience must have been severely taxed. For while Jesus was on the way to his house, the people were around Him on all sides, desiring to go with Him and witness the healing of the sick girl for which Jairus had pleaded. Thereby Jesus was compelled to move along very slowly, since no one can make rapid progress when walking in the midst of a crowd. To detain Him still more, a woman came to Him right through the multitude that was besetting Him from all directions. For 12 years she had been afflicted with a very serious illness. So she quietly approached Jesus from behind and touched the seam of His garment, for she so thoroughly believed in His power to do miracles that she said to herself, "If I do but touch His garment, I shall be made whole". And her faith was not disappointed. No sooner had she touched the garment of Jesus than she was cured from

her distressing sickness. During the twelve years of her sore affliction, she had consulted all the doctors, and spent all her money in that way, but found no relief; and now, by simply touching the garment of Jesus, she had at once been entirely cured. How this did show that Jesus was more than mere man! What were all the doctors in the world in comparison with Him? As quietly as the woman had come, she wanted to leave again, not because she was ungrateful for having been healed by the Lord, but because a sense of modesty prevented her from speaking to Jesus publicly concerning the nature of her trouble and the relief that she had secretly gained. However, just when she was about to disappear in the crowd, Jesus turned around and asked, "Who touched My clothes?" When no one said anything in reply, Peter hastened to remark, "Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, 'Who touched Me?'" But Jesus said, "Somebody has touched Me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from Me". In saying this, His eyes were directed toward the woman, who thus stood exposed in the presence of all the people. With fear and trembling she came and fell down before Jesus and told Him everything. But He said to her, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace". All this was good and salutary for the woman; for otherwise she might have become superstitious, believing that the mere contact with the garments of Jesus had brought about her cure. She, as well as all the people present on that occasion, was to know this: No, it was not the garment that effected the cure, but He who had on the garment, and He heals those whom He has the will to heal; and not by touching His garments does anyone become well, but only by having **faith** in Him. All this was also good and salutary for Jairus. It certainly tended to strengthen His faith in the power of Jesus to heal in a miraculous way, when he saw what a wonderful cure He had effected in the case of this woman. Jairus was led to con-

clude, "If He could heal this woman, whom all the doctors had treated in vain, He surely can also restore my daughter to health".

Still, the healing of the sick woman had caused a delay, and Jairus began to say to himself, "Shall we reach our destination soon enough? Oh, if my daughter only does not die before Jesus arrives at my house, He will surely make her whole". Just then, behold, a messenger came, whom his wife had sent to Jairus, and said to him, "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master". Poor Jairus! So it was too late after all! To have the Helper so near, and then to have Him arrive too late to lend help! Oh, how the thought of it distressed the father of the deceased child! The sick woman is restored to health, she can give vent to emotions of joy and gratitude, she has immeasurably won by the detainment on the way; but he is the loser, having lost what was dearest to him, his only daughter. It was enough to make anyone collapse. But take courage, Jairus, and remember that Jesus is right at thy side! Yes, Jesus was already comforting the bereaved father. He said to him, "Fear not, only believe!" And, as if to inspire Jairus with new courage, Jesus now walks briskly to the ruler's house. There is something majestic, something victorious in His whole appearance. Jairus does not understand the full meaning of the words, "Fear not, only believe", but the sure confidence expressed in the whole manner of Jesus, the determination betrayed by His every action, is proof to Jairus that the Master has not yet arrived at the limits of His power to lend help in the present instance.

Can it be that our Savior also has power to overcome death? He has the people remain outside, takes with him only three of His disciples, Peter, James and John, together with Jairus, and enters the yard surrounding the ruler's house. Owing to the eastern custom of burying the dead right on the day of their demise, they find the yard filled with

the neighbors and other people, who have come to enact the customary lamentation over the deceased child. Jesus addresses them, saying, "Why do you weep? The maid is not dead, but sleepeth". But they laughed Him to scorn, thinking that they knew better. Jesus does not stop to explain the sense in which the maid is asleep; He knew well enough that it would have been love's labor lost. Here only one thing could be convincing, the act. So He began by ordering the crowd to leave the yard, wanting to be alone with the parents of the child and His three disciples. Accompanied by them, He enters the house and goes into the room where the little girl is. Cold and rigid she lies before Him. Death rejoiced to have completed his work before the arrival of Him who alone could have prevented him from claiming his booty. But, death, do not triumph too early! Hear, children, what your Savior did. He walked up to the lifeless body, took the little girl's hand and said in a loud tone of voice, "Talitha cumi!" In English this means, "Maid, I say unto thee, arise". And, O wonder of wonders! life returned into the dead body, the girl opened her eyes, looked around inquiringly, and finally caught sight of Jesus (picture!). Then she sat up, arose from her bed, and walked about in the room, perfectly well and sprightly, as she had been before she was taken sick. Jesus, our Savior, had restored her from death to life by the power of His word. Peter, James and John are seen in the picture with an expression of amazement on their faces; they can not comprehend the evident fact that their Master has even conquered death. Jairus and his wife are quite overcome with emotion, and hardly know whether first to embrace their little daughter or to thank Jesus upon their knees. Jesus has His hand raised, as if to admonish them to remain quiet, and, to divert their thoughts, tells them to give the child something to eat. And then He passes out of the house, passes out as Victor, for He has overcome the most terrible foe of man, He has overcome death.

Children, let your eyes be fixed upon our Savior, follow Him with your glances as He passes out of the house of Jairus, out through the gate of the yard, and into the streets of Capernaum. Is there anyone like Him in heaven and on earth? He helps the bridegroom at Cana out of his embarrassment; He makes the fish of the sea enter into Peter's net; He quiets the storm by simply speaking the words, "Peace, be still"; He feeds the hungry souls by preaching to the people and also provides them with bread of wonder for their hungry bodies; He heals the sick, forgives sin and even rescues from death! Will you not love Him? Will you not offer your hearts to Him? Will you not be His own today and forever? Nowhere can you find a Savior mightier and more gracious than He. He has a beauty all His own. Fair are the meadows, fair are the woodlands, robed in flowers of blooming spring; Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer, He makes my sorrowing spirit sing. Fair is the sunshine, fair is the moonlight, bright the sparkling stars on high; Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer than all the angels in the sky. That is true of Him even today. Invisibly He is with all those who love Him, invisibly He is with us also. When you are taken sick, call Him to your bedside and ask Him to make you well. For us, to live is Christ, and death is gain. Through Jesus death has become mere sleep. The day is coming when Jesus will stand at our graves as He stood at the bedside of Jairus' little daughter, and will call us as He called her. Then we shall hear His voice, come out of our graves alive, and be with Him always. Yes, children, Christians are happy people, happy here below because they have a faithful Savior, who redeems from sin, death and every other ill, and happy in the world above, where sin, death and all other ills are unknown.

"Let me go, let me go,
Lord, to me Thy presence show;

Thither still my heart is turning,
For Thy heav'nly courts in yearning,
There Thy perfect rest to know."

16. How Jesus Would Also Have Little Children Brought to Him.

What great things we have already heard about Jesus! We have indeed heard enough to convince us that He is the true Savior, and that we can do nothing better than to follow Him, as His faithful disciples. He helps those who are His own out of their embarrassments and makes them the recipients of His bountiful gifts. He blesses the work of their calling above all that they ask and think. He is abundantly able to rescue them even from the most perilous situations, where death seems to be their unavoidable doom. He feeds their souls with His word, and nourishes their hungry bodies with bread provided by Him in a miraculous way. He delivers them from the most serious illness, so that they are able once more to straighten their limbs and the whole body is restored to health. He encourages those who are disheartened by granting them forgiveness, so that they may look up to God again, realizing that He is not against them, but for them, that He is not their enemy and adversary, but their Friend, regarding them with eyes expressive of His good will and pleasure. Yes, our Savior can even raise people from the dead; through Him our graves have become veritable bed-chambers, out of which He will call us forth on the last day, as a mother calls her children in the morning and awakens them out of their slumbers, so that we may be re-united with father and mother, who have preceded us in death and await us in the world beyond. There is no need so great but that He can supply it, no sin so grievous but that He can forgive it, no death so terrible but that He can awaken one from it. He is equal to any emergency in which His own may

need Him; for He places the whole fullness of His power and grace at their service. Blessed is he who belongs to Jesus and is His true disciple. He is the Friend of the poor, as well as the Friend of sinners. He is the Stay of the dying and the Life of the dead. But what is He to you children? May you also regard Him as your Friend? Yes, children, you may indeed. Thus far, it is true, we have heard only such stories which speak of the great and beautiful things that Jesus did in dealing with grown-up people; but the Bible also contains a story which pictures Jesus to us, in a very special way, as the Friend of children. It must have been indelibly impressed upon the minds of the Gospel writers, as a story of extraordinary value, because no less than three times do we find it related in the New Testament. I shall relate it to you this morning, and you will no doubt be glad to hear **how Jesus would also have little children brought to Him.**

Jesus was on His way from Galilee down to Judaea; it was the last time that He made this journey. He chose the route which took Him across the Jordan and through the region east of the river (map!). While He was enroute, He came into a village where He entered a certain house in order to rest from His journey. He probably was asked to be seated in the yard surrounding the house, since it was in the yard that any Jewish family spent the major part of its time. Soon the report had spread throughout the village that Jesus, the great Prophet of Nazareth, mighty in word and deed, was in town. This set the whole village astir. Some came to Him with their sick, that He might heal them; others had all kinds of questions to ask, and still others wanted to hear Him preach. Jesus willingly complied with their diverse wishes. He healed their sick, answered their questions and preached to as many as were desirous of hearing Him. At last, some mothers even came to Him with their children, leading those who were already able to use their little feet, and carrying the smallest ones on their arms. They wanted Jesus to lay His

hands upon their children and bless them. They probably had no clear ideas as to what they really desired for their little ones. But they had seen Jesus lay His hands upon the sick, with the result that they were made well. So they thought, "We will also take our children to Him; they are that which we cherish most here on earth, and He will surely impart something to them which will be for their benefit as long as they live. While it is not necessary that He should give them anything to improve their bodily health, since they are perfectly well and lively, He will be able to give them a blessing for their souls. In no case will they leave Him without having been benefited". And so they brought them to Jesus.

Their motherly hearts had indeed struck the right thing. No doubt, Jesus had on previous occasions shown Himself kindly disposed toward little children. We can not imagine Him as having done anything to the contrary.* With His mild eyes He watched them when they were at play. It gave Him pleasure to have them flock around Him. With keen delight He set them on His lap and talked to them about the flowers of the field, and the birds of the air, about the heavenly Paradise with its trees of life and its crystal streams, about the Father in heaven, who with eyes of kindness looked down upon them, and about the holy angels, who all unseen were beside them as their protectors. The children trustfully looked into His kind face, and when He began to tell them such beautiful things they forgot all about their play, and just could not hear enough about the heavenly world, which He pictured to them in the most delightful colors. And Jesus Himself, for the time being, forgot all about the toil and care

* Matth. 18, 2 warrants the inference that a relation of simple confidence existed between Jesus and little children; in Matth, 21, 15. 16 Jesus appears as shielding them; in Mark 10, 13 and Luke 18, 15 the use of the imperfect tense is significant.

of this earthly life, and seemed to exist only for the children that were grouped about Him, sitting upon His lap or leaning against His knees. With the souls of those children who showed themselves interested in His divine teachings, His spirit soared to that eternal home from which He had come upon this earth to seek and to save that which was lost, to get them at least and lead them into the mansions of light above, where the heavenly Father resides.

But this time, when His disciples saw those women coming to Jesus with their little children, they thought, "It is enough for today; our Master is very tired and needs to rest". And there was something else that they thought when they noticed how very small most of those children were, some of them being only a few months or weeks old: "What could our Master do for them? He would not be able to talk to them; for they are too young to understand Him. Let these mothers wait until their children have grown larger; our Master can do nothing for them at this tender age.". So when the mothers tried to press forward with their little ones and take them into the immediate presence of Jesus, His disciples motioned to them, as if to say, "Keep your distance!" When the women took no heed of their motioning, the disciples rebuked them, using words that sounded harsh and forbidding. When the women even disregarded these words of rebuke, the disciples were on the point of pushing them back by sheer force. Their manner looked threatening enough, and it seemed quite impossible for the women to reach Jesus with their little children. The chances were against them, and the way things looked, there was nothing left for them but to return home without having accomplished their purpose.

Yes, but Jesus had a word to say in this matter. Those who were being brought to Him were not to be sent away from Him. The time had come for Him to intervene. And we have already intimated that He was not going to take the side

of His disciples. Indeed, He was far from saying to those mothers, "Yes, My disciples are quite right; I am too tired today for busying Myself with your children; return to your homes in peace". Much less did He say to them, "It is true, for such little children I can do nothing anyway, so you might as well give up the idea of having Me benefit them in some form or other". No, Jesus thought and said nothing of the kind. He was indeed moved with indignation, but His displeasure was not directed against the women, as if they wanted to molest Him unnecessarily. Instead of that, He was displeased with His disciples because they did not want those little children to be brought to Him; for He said to them, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God". Then He sat down beside the house, took the smallest of the children upon His arms, one after the other, permitted the larger ones to cuddle at His knees, embraced them all, laid His hands upon them and spoke words of blessing over them. Look at our picture! No better image could be made of Jesus as the Friend of children. Here is a little girl whose hand is resting in His, and there we see a bright boy into whose face He is looking with His kindly eyes, at the same time speaking to him in words betokening His love for children, and His desire to benefit them. Another boy is trying to pull away from his older sister, anxious to be near Jesus, and you will notice that this little girl wants to take a pretty flower to Him. To the right and to the left are more mothers with their children, and their turn will soon come. One of the children is evidently but a few months old. For each child He has a word, a look, a blessing. The disciples of Jesus are in the background. They had imagined they were everything, and here Jesus seems to ignore them entirely, acting as if henceforth He only existed for the little children. They can not understand how it is that their Master seems to have forgotten all about His fatigue, and so busies Himself with these little

children as if He had not done anything all day long to make Him feel tired. What surprises them most is that He blesses even the smallest ones. They rightly concluded that Jesus was able to bless also these little ones in such a way that they were benefited thereby. For they knew that to impart a blessing was with Him not a mere formality, but a means of conveying great temporal and spiritual gifts or benefits. Hence they had been mistaken when they thought that Jesus was not able to benefit these little ones. The disciples realized this, and they now saw plainly that one does not need to be a grown-up person, that one does not even have to be able to talk before he can enter into the kingdom of God. This was an important lesson for the disciples, a lesson which they did not only learn, but which they also remembered to the very end of their lives. To this lesson Jesus at once added another, one that had even a more direct reference to them. For He continued to say to His disciples, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein". This was a startling revelation to His disciples. He tells them as much as this: "You foolish disciples of Mine, to think that I can give nothing to these children because they are not old enough! I tell you, as long as you older people do not become as little children, you are not fit to enter into the kingdom of God at all. You are forever imagining that your entrance into the kingdom of God depends upon your own reasoning and understanding, upon your own work and effort, upon your own running and chasing. But I assure you, if anyone desires to enter into this kingdom, he needs only one thing, and it is this: to be receptive, to receive what is freely given to him. Just as children, without offering willful resistance, gladly accept what is given them, just as they readily submit to being embraced, fondled, kissed and blessed, just as they not only receive but also retain with a grateful heart what is bestowed upon them, so, just so, must you permit

God to make you a gift of His kingdom, or you will not enter into it at all. Even faith, of which I so often speak, and by which you indeed enter into the kingdom of God, is not something that you can give to yourselves; with all your wisdom you can never obtain it; it is and ever remains a gift. Therefore, become as beggars, willingly and gratefully accepting what is offered to you as a gift; suffer yourselves to become as little children, who so gladly accept and retain what is given to them". At this saying the disciples of Jesus opened their eyes, and then bowed their heads, having been made to feel ashamed of their behavior. They had of a truth been deeply humbled. While they had believed themselves to be absolutely sure of the kingdom of God, their Master solemnly declares that it will never belong to them unless they become as little children and simply receive it as a free gift.

The mothers, on the other hand, must have been glad that they had not allowed themselves to be scared away by the disciples of Jesus. Without doubt, they heartily thanked Jesus for having blessed their little ones. The children themselves came to understand later in life what that blessing meant to them. Their parents, as we have reason to believe, told them many a time what a benefit it was for them to have received the Lord's blessing. The thought, "Jesus laid His hands upon me, and I belong to Him", was to them a shield against evil, and a source of comfort in many a need.

To return to our picture, it is very beautiful, representing Jesus as blessing the little children. It contains a message for you in particular. You are to remember that Jesus also wants you in His kingdom, and not only people that are more advanced in years. While He sojourned here on earth, He forgot all about His being tired, and willingly devoted Himself to the little ones that were brought to Him. He even spoke very sternly to His disciples because they had tried to keep back the mothers who were coming to Him with

their children, desirous of having Him lay His hands upon them and bless them. By this you can tell how earnestly He wishes to welcome the children into His kingdom. You see, that is why your parents brought you to Jesus in holy baptism when you were still mere infants. When the minister poured the water upon your head, saying, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", He, as it were, laid His hands upon you and blessed you. God then said to you, "I will be your Father, and you shall be My children. I and you will henceforth belong to each other. You may pray to Me, and I will answer you. Your baytism delivers you from sin, death and the devil and gives you eternal life. You are from this time forth members and heirs of My kingdom". Behold, what love! Behold, what a Savior! Therefore, children, if you want to know whether Jesus loves you and wishes also to be your Savior, think of this story concerning Jesus as the Friend of children, and of your baptism; these two assure you ever anew that you are in favor with God, and prompt you to sing with joyful hearts, "Thou receivest me, O Father, as a child and heir of Thine; Jesus, Thou who diedst, yea, rather ever livest, Thou art mine; Thou, O Spirit, Thou, O Spirit, art my Guide, my Light divine". But if the Savior has made you God's children and members of His kingdom, then you may also appropriate unto yourselves all that we mentioned before; then He will keep you out of your embarrassments as He did the bridegroom at Cana, then He will bless your work as He did that of Simon Peter, then He will rescue you from danger as He did His disciples, then He will nourish your souls with His word and your bodies with bread, then He will restore you to health when you are sick, then He will forgive you all your sins, raise you from the dead and take you unto Himself in heaven. Then all will be well with you. What will be your response to all that you have thus heard about your Savior? Let it be this:

"Beautiful Savior! King of creation!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I'd love Thee, truly I'd serve Thee,
Light of my soul, my Joy, my Crown.

Fair are the meadows, fair are the woodlands,
Robed in flowers of blooming spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer;
He makes my sorrowing spirit sing.

Fair is the sunshine, fair is the moonlight,
Bright the sparkling stars on high;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels in the sky.

Beautiful Savior! Lord of the nations!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, praise, adoration,
Now and forevermore be Thine!"

17. Jesus Is Indeed the Good Shepherd.

"They are as sheep that have no shepherd"—this is what Jesus said about the Jewish people. Sheep without a shepherd, however, are poor and lost creatures. We can notice that even here in our own country. If a herd of sheep happens to run at large, without anyone to direct them, they are very helpless and stupid. One can tell by the way they act that they are lost and forsaken. How easily they become separated from one another! How hard it is for the separated ones to find their way back to the herd! In the east this is much more noticeable than here in the west. Our public highways are not without grass, so that stray sheep still can find some food. Then, too, the second or third farmer down the road will probably drive the lost and scattered sheep into

his yard and keep them there until his neighbor, whom he notifies by telephone, can come and get them. Conditions are quite different in the eastern countries. There, when the sheep have no shepherd to guide them, they are indeed quite lost out on the open plains, where one has to be well acquainted in order that he may be able to find the places where the grass grows and where there is water for the flocks. If the sheep have no shepherd who leads them to these fertile spots, they will famish for lack of food and water. Sometimes, they are also endangered by wild animals, like the wolf. Formerly, those regions used to be haunted even by bears and a small species of lions. Such beasts of prey watch for the sheep, especially for the lost and scattered ones, snatch one here and another one there, carry it away and devour it. In the east a herd of sheep without a shepherd is, therefore, an emblem of forsakenness. It was in this sense also that Jesus spoke of the Jewish people in His days as being like sheep that have no shepherd. He meant to say that they were most sadly lost and forsaken, that unless someone intervened and helped them they would utterly perish and end in eternal destruction. For while they were amply provided with meat and drink, clothing and shoes, while they showed no lack of ability to get along in their temporal affairs without a special leader, they were spiritually destitute and did not know in the least how one may win favor with God, how one may obtain forgiveness of sin, and gain that peace of soul which passes all understanding. They thought that it was necessary for them to merit divine grace by their own efforts at obeying the law. So they started out to win God's favor through the fulfillment of His commandments and through strict obedience to all the statutes of the elders, but they did not reach the goal toward which they aspired. By all these fruitless efforts their strength had become exhausted. Figuratively speaking, they were lying all along the way in a state of utter exhaustion, and lacked all power to continue on their way. Unless some

one came to help them soon, they were lost. Their conscience told them that they must be at one with God, but they had no knowledge as to how, in their sinful state, they might approach Him, since they had learned to regard God solely as the stern Legislator and as the terrible Judge who banishes the sinner from His presence forever. And they had no shepherd to teach them the truth concerning the real nature of God, to take the weary and heavy laden by the hand and lead them to the God of their salvation. To this people Jesus came and offered Himself as their Shepherd. Of this I shall speak this morning somewhat at length; for our story requires me to tell you **how Jesus declared Himself to be the Good Shepherd.**

In the far east there were numerous shepherds and many large herds. Great stretches of land, too stony or sandy to be plowed and otherwise cultivated, could still be used for grazing purposes. In places there was an abundance of grass, especially during the rainy season, when the water that fell from the clouds filled all the deep places and often caused springs to bubble up out of the ground. To such green pastures in the midst of a desert region the shepherd led his flock. With his long staff he walked ahead of the sheep, and they followed him. He only needed to call them in order to make them come toward him and follow him on his way, because they knew his voice. In our picture we see such a shepherd with his herd of sheep. They are following him in a long train. It would seem that they are just now passing through a barren stretch of land where there is nothing for the sheep to eat. But they do not appear to be worried in the least; they know from experience that their shepherd will soon take them to green pastures again and make them lie down beside the still waters. Good shepherds indeed knew all the green places in the wilderness and also the spots where water was to be found for their herds. If it was not a spring (for springs were rather scarce), it was at least a cistern. These

cisterns were hewn into the rock, and in them the waters collected during the rainy season of the year. While these receptacles for the rain water were deep and at the bottom very wide, they had a rather narrow mouth and could therefore easily be kept closed by means of a flat stone. A pail which was fastened to a rope stood beside the cistern, ready for use. There were also in evidence a number of troughs not unlike those seen in our own barn-yards. Into these troughs the shepherd poured the water for his sheep. Patiently he drew one pailful after another out of the cistern and emptied it into these watering troughs, until all the sheep of his flock had drunk as much as they desired. For he felt it to be his duty to find green pastures and plenty of fresh water for his sheep.

But what the shepherds in those eastern countries owed to their sheep, that the Jewish leaders were in duty bound to provide for the whole people of Israel. The people were the herd which God had entrusted to them as spiritual shepherds. They were to see to it that the people in their entirety did not lack green pastures and fresh water in the spiritual sense of these terms. They should have untiringly led the people to God as to Him who Himself would make provision for their spiritual needs, and send them the Savior. Thus would the people have been inspired with hope, and new life would have entered their weary hearts. There would have been nourishing food and refreshing drink for the hungry and thirsty souls of the people. But in this respect the leaders of Israel failed to do their duty, and that is why the people were as sheep that have no shepherd. While such conditions prevailed in Israel, Jesus came and said to the people, "I am the Good Shepherd; I will make you to lie down in green pastures and lead you beside the still waters; I will restore your souls by supplying them with nourishing food and refreshing drink, so that you may not want in anything". And Jesus did not only declare Himself to be the Good Shepherd,

but also manifested Himself as such from the very beginning of His public ministry. For when he staid at Capernaum, or journeyed through Galilee, or went down to Judaea and preached the Gospel of God's love to all classes of people, to all those, at least, who wanted to hear Him, He fed the hungry and gave drink to the thirsty souls. While listening to Him, as He discoursed to the people in the halls of the temple, in the synagogues of the different cities and villages, on the shores of Lake Gennesaret, or in private houses here and there, anyone could gain a vivid impression of these great, fundamental truths: God the Father is indeed our Judge; but before He deals with us in this capacity, He offers Himself to us as Savior and Redeemer; not until one refuses to accept Him as Savior does He confront him as Judge and banish him from His presence. God is love, and in His compassionate love sent His Son into the world; whosoever believes in Him will not be judged. Oh, this was indeed just the food which the hungry souls of the people needed, and the refreshing water for which their thirsty souls had longed all these years, the message of God's helping, rescuing, redeeming love. That is why they so willingly listened to His discourses, that is why they followed Him in crowds as He traversed the Jewish land in all directions, that is why they imbibed the strength and comfort that issued from His sermons, even as the sheep imbibe the refreshing spring water after they have almost perished with thirst. When Jesus stood facing the people, while they sat and listened to His sermons, He was the Shepherd and they the sheep of His pasture, for whose souls He made better provision than any shepherd ever made for the bodily welfare of his sheep.

The shepherd in the eastern countries had still another task to perform. On those long marches through the desert regions it sometimes happened that certain ones among the sheep grew faint and sick. If for this reason they could not well keep up with the rest, the good shepherd did not beat

and kick them, nor did he give them a shaking, or even have the dogs chase them. No, he attended to them in an altogether different way. If they had been wounded, he sat down beside them and bandaged their wounds. For their sake he had the whole herd march as slowly as possible and only a short distance at a time. If the weak and wounded ones happened to be lambs, he even picked them up alternately and carried them in his bosom for a distance (picture). In case that one of the sheep strayed away from the herd, he left his faithful dog to watch the others while he went after the one that was lost, zealously seeking it, so that, if possible, he might bring it back with him and let it rejoin the flock.

With reference also to this phase of the good shepherd's work Jesus made the claim of being the Good Shepherd. And that He was amply justified in making this claim, for this His work as Savior offers abundant proof. Think of His going about in the Jewish land and healing the sick! He enabled the lame to walk, the blind to see and the deaf to hear. He cleansed the lepers and restored these unfortunate outcasts to society; whatever might be anyone's affliction, Jesus gave him relief. If people came to Him for special advice, He never disappointed them, but willingly listened to their story and helped them with His wise counsels. At such times He often forgot all about His being tired, or put off others and waited on those who most urgently needed His attention. Nicodemus, a prominent ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night; but in spite of the unseasonable hour Jesus sat together with him for a long while and showed him how one may enter into the kingdom of God. Thus Jesus, by the special concern which He showed for those who were particularly in need of His help and advice, yea, by the efficient way in which He treated such special cases, proved Himself to be what He said He was, the Good Shepherd. Only those who wilfully closed their eyes to the facts could fail to see in Him the great and good Shepherd of His flock.

The real test for the Oriental shepherd, however, came at those critical moments when some wild beast would stealthily approach the herd, to snatch one of the sheep, to drag it away and devour it. Then it was for him to show whether he was really a faithful shepherd or not. Thus we know that king David, when he was still herding the sheep of his father Jesse, had to defend the flock, once over against a lion and at another time over against a bear. The lion came right up to the flock and boldly snatched a sheep, intending to run away with it. What did David do? He did not run away for fear the lion might also grab him, but followed the bold robber, pounded him with his staff and gave him to understand that he was not entitled to the sheep that he was holding in his mouth. David did not think of himself and his own life, or he would have fled; no, he only thought of the sheep and its peril; therefore he risked his own life, in order to rescue the imperiled sheep from the jaws of the murderous beast. The lion grew angry when David so unexpectedly applied the staff to him. He let go of the sheep and went for his assailant. Now David's own life was at stake. But even now he did not give way to fear; on the contrary, he looked right straight into the flashing eyes of the infuriated robber, seized him by his mane and gave him such hard raps on his head that he reeled and fell to the ground. Then David finished killing him. As for the wounded sheep, he washed its wounds and let it rest in the shade of a tree until it had recovered. In this way a faithful shepherd protected his sheep. At another time David defended them over against a bear. Later, there were but few lions and bears in the land of Canaan. Instead of these, wolves made their appearance and proved to be a great menace to the sheep. The faithful shepherd, especially one who himself owned the sheep, courageously engaged in a fight with the wolf that attempted to break into the herd. The unfaithful shepherd, on the other hand, especially if he did not own the sheep, but was only hired to

take care of them, saw the wolf coming and immediately fled, and the wolf caught one of the sheep and scattered the rest. The hireling regarded his own life too highly, and was too indifferent toward the sheep, to risk his life for them. He did not stand the test by which the faithful shepherd is made known. For only the faithful shepherd proves himself equal to the supreme test of staking his life for his sheep.

Jesus wanted to be such a good shepherd. That is why He once said, "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd, and knew My sheep, and am known by Mine, as My Father knoweth Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep". Twice in succession Jesus here declared that He was the Good Shepherd, and that He would prove it by laying down His life for the sheep. He would not content Himself with the task of leading Israel to the green pastures and to the flowing fountains of His word, in order thus to satisfy the hunger and thirst of their souls; He would not regard it as sufficient for Himself to take in charge the weak, to bandage the wounded, to restore the sick and afflicted; no, He would do more for Israel and for all men, He would shield them against their enemy, He would enter into combat with him, He would even give His life for them in this combat, thereby to rescue them from the power of this enemy forever.

But what sort of an enemy was he who proved so dangerous to Israel and all men? In the case of the sheep in the eastern countries it was the wolf, the bear, or the lion; who, then, was the foe of Israel and of all men, the foe that menaced their life? Children, it was the devil. He did not have to exert himself to approach them, for he already had them in his power, and if no Helper stronger than he came to rescue

them, he would lead them into his infernal kingdom and hold them there forever. You know the story of the fall. You are aware that by inducing man to sin the devil gained power over him, so that he was their master, and they were no longer free to return to God To be in the power of the devil, however, is the saddest lot that could have befallen man. Under such conditions, one is lost in a far worse way than the sheep which has gone astray and which the wolf seeks to devour. Man often rebelled against this rule of the devil, trying to relieve himself of the chains with which Satan had bound him, just as a prisoner pulls at the door of the prison; but he was not able to break them. He exerted himself to do the will of God, but in the end the devil always remained the master. So unless a stronger Helper came to enter into combat with the devil and carry the combat to a victorious conclusion, there was nothing left for man but to remain forever in the power of that fierce enemy.

Happily, children, Someone did come into the world to conquer this enemy of man and set the world free. It was our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He had the power needed to vanquish the old bitter foe and to deliver humanity from his grasp, for He was the Son of God. He was also willing, as the Good Shepherd, to enter into death for His sheep, to wrest them from the dominion of darkness and win them back to God. He did not think of Himself, but had in mind only the lost sheep, with all their needs, with all their misery; He had compassion with them and could not bear to see them lost forever. He had already done much for them, but now He was going to do one thing more,—give His life for their sake. O children, what love, what faithfulness! Men had turned from God, yielded to sin and incurred guilt; but Jesus did not look upon their sin so much as upon their misery and wretchedness, and, to rescue them from their sad, fallen state, was ready to lay down His precious life.

There was nothing greater and higher that He, as the Good Shepherd, could do for His sheep.

If Jesus has become endeared to us because we have learned that He provides His sheep with green pastures and refreshing water, and because we have seen that He tenderly nurses and heals them in times of sickness, He must win our hearts even more when we are told that He is willing to give His life for us. Besides, we know that He **did** give His life for us, who are the sheep of His pasture. He fought with the prince of darkness and in this great combat suffered death upon the cross. But He nevertheless came out of the conflict as Victor, for on Easter He arose again from the dead, and thus He stands before us as the faithful Shepherd. Now if we hear His voice, and follow only Him, the devil can do us no harm whatsoever; he can not wrest us out of Jesus' hands. Jesus now wishes to lead us all as His sheep, so that we may never perish, but have everlasting life. Is He not a Shepherd worth being followed? Is there anyone else whose voice we should want to hear more willingly than His? To whom do we want to belong, if not to Him alone? He has redeemed, purchased and won us from all sin, from death and from the power of the devil, not with siiver and gold, but with His holy and precious blood, and with His innocent sufferings and death, in order that we might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. So let us be His own! What is it that we sing regarding the happiness of one who has become a sheep or lamb of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ? It is this: "I am Jesus' little lamb, ever glad at heart I am; Jesus loves me, Jesus knows me, all things fair and good He shows me; even calls me by my name; ev'ry day He is the same. Safely in and out I go, Jesus guides me here below; when I hunger, Jesus feeds me; when I thirst, my Shepherd leads me where the waters softly flow, where the sweetest pastures grow. Should I not be always

glad? None whom Jesus loves are sad; and when this short life is ended, those whom the Good Shepherd tended will be taken to the skies, there to dwell in Paradise". And now, what shall be our resolve today and always? Let it be this:

O Savior, Shepherd good and fair,
Who watchest all Thy sheep with care,
That none of them may go astray
And wander from Thy flock away,—

I, too, one of Thy flock will be
And confidently follow Thee,
Will ever heed my Shepherd's voice
And never make another choice.

18. How Jesus Died For Us on Good Friday.

"I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep," in giving vent to these words, Jesus foretold that He would make the great sacrifice that was needed to redeem, not only His people Israel, but the whole world. He declared that He, as the Good Shepherd, would lay down His life for the sheep. Were His words later verified by His deeds? Most assuredly. The present Lenten season, especially Holy Week, is fraught with memories of our Savior's sufferings and death. In various forms we have presented to us the message that the Good Shepherd laid down His life for us, the sheep of His pasture. Palm Sunday, which we are observing right now, tells us the story of His last entrance into Jerusalem. Holy Thursday will remind us of His betrayal by Judas Iscariot and of His capture by the Roman soldiers and the servants of the high priest. On Good Friday we shall commemorate His death upon the cross. With the events of that day we are going to deal somewhat more closely this morning. Our story is to tell us **how Jesus died for us on Good Friday.**

The Roman governor Pontius Pilate had, between 7 and 8 o'clock in the morning, sentenced Jesus to suffer death by way of crucifixion. This cruel sentence was now to be carried into effect. Several of the soldiers therefore got a heavy beam and a cross-piece, and made the cross upon which Jesus was to be suspended. Others brought together the implements that were needed for the work ahead of them. They consisted of shovels, hammers and a number of large nails. It must have been around 8 o'clock when the procession started from the judgment hall of Pilate. In spirit we shall follow it to its destination, which is Mount Golgotha. At the head of the procession rode the Roman captain; then came the soldiers, with Jesus in their midst. The soldiers had laid the heavy beam upon His shoulders, that He might bear His own cross out of the city and up to the hill where they proposed to crucify Him. It was a burden heavy enough for a strong man; how heavy it must, therefore, have been for Jesus, who since the hour of His capture had been so greatly abused and weakened! Beside Him, the holy and guiltless One, were walking the two criminals whom they were going to crucify with Him. Thus was fulfilled the word of the prophet Isaiah, spoken 800 years before, "He was numbered with the transgressors". The place of the crucifixion was outside of the city, upon a mount called Golgotha; the procession, therefore, moved in the direction of this place. They may have gotten to the foot of the mount, when Jesus suddenly became exhausted and broke down beneath His cross. The soldiers probably struck Him and tried to make Him go ahead with His burden; but they soon noticed that it was quite impossible for Him thus to continue on His way. If they wanted to bring Him to the mount alive and crucify Him there, some one else would have to carry the cross for Him. But who was going to carry it? The soldiers themselves had no desire to take it upon their own shoulders. Just then they saw a man coming across the field whose name was

Simon of Cyrene. Upon his shoulders they laid the cross of Jesus, without any further ado, and compelled him to carry it. Simon felt like offering resistance, but it would have done him no good, since there were too many against whom he would have had to contend. Besides, the longer he looked upon Jesus, the more willing he may have grown to bear His cross for Him; two of Simon's sons later became disciples of Jesus.

Slowly the procession moved up the mount; it constantly increased as it proceeded on its way, until a large crowd was following Jesus to the place of His crucifixion. Most prominent among those in the crowd were the high priests and elders; they marched right at the front, rejoicing that they had finally succeeded in carrying their murderous plans against Jesus into effect. Besides them, however, there were thousands who belonged to the common people, including an especially large number of women. Some of these women were not so hard-hearted as the men; they were moved to tears when they saw what was being done with Jesus and how hard it was for Him to bear His cross, or even to keep on His feet and walk along in the company of the soldiers. Their sympathy for Jesus was so strong that they could not help weeping aloud at the sight of His suffering. It was the first time since His capture that softer and better feelings found expression. In a way, this must have been comforting to Jesus; and yet, the tears of those women had not been prompted by a deeper understanding of what His sufferings really meant. They only wept on His account, as if He were the most pitiable man in all Jerusalem; they did not realize that He was going to His death for their sake, nor did they stop to think how gravely the whole Jewish people were sinning against Jesus and how severely God would some day punish them. Jesus therefore stood still, turned around, and, without regarding the soldiers who were accompanying Him, said to the women in a loud tone of voice, "Women of Jeru-

salem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. That your elders are delivering Me into death, will not remain unpunished. Because of this bloody deed the day will come when your children would rather be dead than endure the punishment that will be inflicted upon them; they will then say to these mountains, 'Fall upon us!' and to these hills, 'Cover us!'; for they would rather be buried by the mountains than fall into the hands of the enmies whom God will send to punish them". And what Jesus thus foretold actually came to pass thirty-seven years later, when in the year 70 after Christ's birth Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Romans.

At last the procession had reached the top of the mount. There the soldiers dug a deep hole in the ground, stripped Jesus of His garments, laid Him on the cross, spread out His arms, took long, sharp nails and, with heavy hammers, drove them through the hands and feet of Jesus, and thus fastened His living body to the cross; then they lifted up the cross and let it sink into the hole which they had made, raised the cross until it stood perfectly upright, and filled the hole with earth and stones, and rammed in wedges to make the cross stand firm. This completed their gruesome task, and so Jesus now hung there on the cross, suspended between heaven and earth. Above His head they affixed a superscription which read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews". Oh, what pain it must have caused Jesus when they drove the sharp nails through His hands and when the cross sank into the hole with a thud! The soldiers knew how painful it would be, so they previously offered Jesus myrrh in wine, the drinking of which was to render Him partially unconscious; but Jesus wanted to suffer death in full consciousness of what was happening to Him, and so refused to partake of the drink that was to have rendered Him less sensitive to pain. Death by crucifixion is the most cruel death imaginable, and at that time there was also no more shameful death imaginable

than that which was brought about by nailing a man to the cross. Both Jews and Gentiles were deeply imbued with the idea that nothing could be more shameful than to suffer crucifixion. The Jews intentionally selected this way of putting Jesus to death, so that no one might continue to regard Him as the Savior. Great, therefore, as was the bodily pain that Jesus endured, much greater must have been the pain which His soul felt because His people so grievously sinned against Him. Oh, how terrible was the judgment which they merited by committing such a sin! Jesus therefore raised His eyes up to heaven and prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do". In the midst of all His bodily pain and mental anguish which they had caused Him to suffer, Jesus does not think of Himself, but of them, and prays that the wrath of God may not spend itself on them. It was the first time in the history of the world that anyone prayed for his enemies and murderers, asking God to grant them forgiveness. Jesus did not only say to us, "Love your enemies!" but did so Himself and showed it by praying for them. How great, how inexpressibly great must have been His love!

But those who stood nearest to the cross had no sense of appreciation for the spirit which Jesus had thus made manifest. The soldiers did not have it, for they sat down beneath the cross and divided His garments among themselves, as if to harvest the spoils of the crucifixion. The elders also did not have it, for they only remained standing under the cross, in order that they might see how intensely Jesus was suffering. The greater His sufferings were, the better it suited them. Their hatred was so venomous that they could not even keep from mocking Jesus right in the midst of His intense pain and suffering on the cross. Said they, "He helped others, and can not help Himself! If Thou art the Son of God and the King of Israel, come down from the cross, and we will believe Thee". Rudeness and mockery, however, are

contageous. It did not take long until the people joined the elders in mocking Jesus, and the soldiers likewise imitated them. Sharp, poisonous darts, piercing the body of Jesus, could not have caused Him such pain as did these words of mockery. Who would have the rudeness to mock a dying person? Here the Savior is dying for man's salvation, and men thank Him for it by trying to outdo each other in mocking and blaspheming Him. But the one that outdid all the others in rudeness was one of the malefactors who were crucified with Jesus; every word that he spoke cost him an effort, but he was not going to die without having added his share to the mockery of the crowd beneath the cross. So he said to Jesus, "If Thou art the Son of God, then help Thyself and us". Yet right in the midst of all this mockery and jeering and blaspheming Jesus was to experience something that filled His heart with joy; for the other malefactor took the part of Jesus and said to his partner, "Art thou also not afraid, seeing that we are in like damnation? And we justly so; but this One has done nothing amiss". For the last few hours he had kept his eyes fixed on Jesus; he had heard the prayer that Jesus offered for His enemies; he had observed the majesty and innocence of Jesus, yea, it had become his firm belief that Jesus must be a king and have a kingdom that does not end at the hour of death. So he turned to Jesus now and said to Him, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom". Oh, how Jesus rejoiced at the faith of this malefactor! It was to His soul what a drink of fresh water would have been to His thirsty body. And this is what He replied to the request of the repentant man beside Him, "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise". This was the first soul that Jesus won by His suffering.

Toward noon it had grown more quiet around the cross. Many of the people had gone away after the first few hours had passed by. Among them were the elders; they had accomplished their purpose, and, besides, had taken pleasure in

witnessing the agony of Jesus and making sport of His supposed inability to help Himself; they were satisfied that this meant the end of Him whom they had so long tried to get out of the way; so they left Him. But the more it grew quiet about the cross, the nearer those ventured to come to it who were nearest and dearest to Jesus during His earthly sojourn. Thus it happened that right near the cross were now standing Mary, His mother; Salome, His mother's sister; another Mary, and Mary Magdalene; and among these women stood John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved". Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John, His beloved disciple, were in need of special comfort at this hour. For upon whom should Mary lean for support, now that her Son was dying on the cross? And with whom was John to talk of Jesus, His beloved Master? So, behold, the dying Savior thinks of these two in a special way, for He looked at John and said to Mary, "Woman, behold thy son", and then He looked at Mary and said to John, "Behold, thy mother!" These few words were sufficient; they both knew what Jesus meant to say. John took Mary into his house and cared for her until she died.

The three words which we have thus far mentioned were spoken by Jesus in the forenoon, from 9 to 12 o'clock. Just at noon it suddenly grew very dark. The sun stopped shining and the densest darkness enveloped the scene of the crucifixion. How this frightened the people! Silently they stood there, or groped about in the dark. It seemed as if the sun did not want to shine upon the most awful scene ever enacted by man. The silence became increasingly oppressive. Nothing was heard but the groans of the crucified men and the drops of blood that fell to the ground. This lasted for three whole hours. Suddenly, at three o'clock in the afternoon, a loud and anxious cry rang through the darkness. Jesus called out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" The sound of these words was never forgotten by John and the women

under the cross. Translated into English they read thus: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Those three hours were the hardest in the whole sufferings of Jesus. While that intense darkness lasted, Jesus was forsaken, not only by men, but also by God, so that He no longer felt anything of the Father's love. He endured this feeling of forsakenness for our sake, in order that we might not be eternally forsaken by God. In those three hours He tasted what we, on account of our sins, would have had to suffer in hell eternally. However, though the Savior could not feel anything of God's love in those dark hours, He held fast to the conviction that God after all was **His** God, and His love toward His God and Father never suffered a moment's interruption. Therefore He, in His deepest need, appealed to no one else but to Him, saying, "**My** God".

After this fourth word on the cross had been spoken, the end rapidly drew near. Jesus was heard sighing, "I thirst!" For the greatest torture which crucified people have to suffer is that of a burning thirst. Jesus knew that He had suffered all that was necessary for our redemption, and there was nothing to prevent Him from taking a drink, as a means of refreshing Himself. The sigh to which Jesus gave vent moved the heart of one of the soldiers, who therefore ran, and, filling a sponge with vinegar, put it on a reed and gave Him to drink. Refreshed by this drink of sour wine, Jesus spoke His sixth word on the cross, "It is finished!" He spoke it in a loud tone of voice, because it was a shout of victory which all the world was to hear. The whole life of Jesus for which He came into the world, all the work that He did, all the agony that He suffered for our benefit, the whole work of redemption, all that the word salvation implies, was now brought to a finish. The hour has arrived in which He may return to the Father, and to the Father He therefore directs His seventh word on the cross, "Father into Thy

hands I commit My spirit". And when He had said this, He bowed His head and expired.

And behold, the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent, and the graves in the rocks were opened, and the dead that were buried there arose. In the temple, the curtain was torn which had the thickness of four fingers, and which separated the Most Holy from the Holy Place. The curtain was rent from top to bottom. People were to notice that something great had happened, something that did not have its equal. That something great had occurred, was also realized by the Roman captain, who therefore exclaimed, "Verily, this was a good man and the Son of God". The same impression was shared by the people, namely, that something quite out of the ordinary had taken place. For they went home beating their breasts. We, children, know what happened on this first Good Friday between three and four o'clock: The Son of God died for us upon the cross. He thereby redeemed us from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, in order that we might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. This is most certainly true.

19. How Jesus Arose From the Dead and Appeared to Mary Magdalene.

It was on Good Friday, between 3 and 4 o'clock in the afternoon, that Jesus died on the cross. Those devout women and John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, were probably standing under the cross still when Jesus bowed His head and gave up His spirit. What were they to do now? They did not want to let the body of Jesus on the cross over night, much less throughout the following Sabbath-day; nor did they care to have the uncouth soldiers handle it, and they could not bear the thought of having it touched by birds of prey. This most likely prompted them to call on Joseph of Arimathea

and tell him of their anxiety. He was a member of the Chief Counsel, and consequently belonged to the higher classes of society in Jerusalem. He had not given his consent to the crucifixion of Jesus, but regarded Him very highly and secretly was one of His disciples. The women and John thought that this man would be able to advise them. Perhaps they even trusted him to take the necessary steps for bringing about the suitable burial of the Lord's body. And this is what he actually did do. He immediately went to Pontius Pilate and asked for permission to take the Lord's body down from the cross and bury it. Pilate gave him this permission. Then Joseph of Arimathea sent a messenger to another prominent Jew by the name of Nicodemus, who also was a disciple of Jesus in secret, with the following message: "We are going to bury the body of Jesus; come, and bring with you the spices that we shall need for this purpose". Both of these men now went out to Mount Golgotha. If heretofore they had been disciples of Jesus only in secret, they no longer hesitated to confess their faith in Him openly. What mattered it to them if the other members of the Chief Counsel should mock and despise them, or even put them entirely out of the Counsel? They were determined rather to suffer such wrong than to let the body of Jesus on the cross any longer. Their love for the Savior now made them courageous and fearless. So they did not hesitate to go out to Golgotha. We may assume that they had sent a servant in advance, with a ladder and other things which they would need in taking the body of Jesus down from the cross. They at once placed the ladder against the cross, ascended it, and carefully pulled the nails out of the hands and feet of Jesus, as if not to cause His dead body any more pain, after which they gently lowered it to the ground. The good women who had gone with them lovingly wiped all the blood from the face of Jesus, and washed both His hands and feet. Then the clean body was laid in a new, snow-white linen cloth and covered over and

over with spices, so as to prevent any unpleasant odor, after which they wrapped the linen around the body several times, thus completing the necessary preparations for its burial. But where were they to lay the body? The Jews preferred to lay the bodies of their dead into tombs hewn into rocks, instead of burying them in the earth, as is customary with us. In such tombs the bodies could be kept intact longer than in graves dug into the earth, and this was to be desired for the sake of the surviving friends and relatives of the deceased. They were not able to keep the dead body in the house for any length of time, owing to the hot climate. It had to be laid to rest on the day of death. For this reason it was desirable that the surviving relatives should be able to go to the tombs of their dead and weep there. Now that the body of Jesus was ready for burial, the question was, where to lay it. A place had to be found at once, because it was already toward evening and the Sabbath was about to begin, upon which all Jews were expected to keep perfectly quiet. It was therefore a good thing that Joseph of Arimathea had a garden right near the place where Jesus had been crucified, and that in this garden he had caused a family tomb to be hewn into the rocks. To that tomb they could take the body of Jesus before the Sabbath began, that is, before six o'clock on Good Friday evening. So Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, John, and several other men, including, perhaps, the one who had the care of the garden, took the body of Jesus, which had been wrapped in pure white linen, and carried it to that garden. Several of the women who had remained standing under the cross to the very last, silently followed the sad procession to the place of burial, not without shedding many a tear. Passing through the door of the garden, they soon stood before a high wall of rock, into which the tomb had been hewn. One of the men lighted a torch, so that they might see better inside of the vault. With great care they bore the body of Jesus through the narrow door to the

tomb, the inside of which widened out into a spaceous chamber, offering room for a number of bodies. Here they laid the body of Jesus, presumably upon some stand or protruding rock. The tomb was entirely new, and no dead person had ever lain in it. The sacred body of God's Son was not to come in contact with the odor of decaying corpses. As soon as they had laid the body of Jesus down and seen that everything was in good order, they gave it a last loving look, passed out of the tomb and placed a large stone before its entrance, which had been kept there for this purpose. No beast of prey was to gain entrance to the sepulchre. Having thus completed the burial of Jesus, they all hastened back to Jerusalem; for they wanted to be in their homes and washed clean before it grew dark and the Sabbath began. So Jesus lay in the grave. As He died for us, so He was also buried for our benefit. We were to know that He really had died; besides, He wanted to lie in the grave in order that we might not be afraid to lie there, but when our time arrived could say, "Our Savior also was buried, and lay in the tomb".

When the men had left the sepulchre, it had grown quiet in and around the same. Who would want to disturb the rest of the dead? And yet, the quietness did not last very long; it continued only until the following day, when several of the high priests hurriedly came into the garden, followed by four soldiers. What was it that brought them to this sacred place? For what purpose had they come? The high priests took a string, stretched it across the stone that closed the entrance to the grave, fastened it at both ends, put wax upon it, and impressed upon this the seal of the high priest, thus declaring the grave to belong to the Chief Counsel, and making it impossible for anyone to open the grave without breaking the seal and thereby committing an offence against that which the Chief Counsel claimed as its property. As for the four soldiers, they were to stand before the grave and watch, so that no one might venture to touch or open it. That looks

as if the chief priests, the most bitter enemies of Jesus, suddenly knew of no greater treasure than His dead body! But it was something altogether different that disturbed their minds. Their bad conscience prompted them to act as they did. When they had succeeded in having Jesus nailed to the cross, they rubbed their hands for glee and said to themselves, "There, we have finished Him, it is all over with Him now, and we shall remain the masters". And yet, they did not feel quite easy about the matter. Their conscience awoke and whispered to them, "What if He were after all the Son of God; what if He should arise from the dead, as He said He would? However, they rejected this thought as being ridiculous. But something else could happen; His disciples might steal His body and then say to the people, "He is risen!" In this event, the people would be deceived worse than ever and would look upon them as the murderers of God's Son. Such a turn of affairs the chief priests wanted to prevent by all means. So they went to Pontius Pilate and said to him, "Sir, we remember that this Deceiver said, while He was yet alive, 'After three days I rise again'. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply His disciples come and steal Him away, and say unto the people, 'He is risen from the dead; and the last error will be worse than the first". To Pontius Pilate this seemed like foolish talk, but he gave them the soldiers, that they might have them stand guard in front of the grave. There! now they finally rested easy; now they at last were sure that they could say, "We are through with Him; He will have to remain in the grave and will never get out of it". And thus they went home rejoicing.

And if they rejoiced, how much more was this the case with death and the devil! Death thought, "I am after all stronger than Thou; it is true, Thou didst take from me my booty several times by calling to life again the daughter of Jairus, the young man of Nain, and just recently Lazarus;

but now I have conquered Thee and will forever remain Thy master. After I shall have consigned people to the grave, they, too, will have to stay there eternally". And the devil thought, "There, now I have gained the victory over Him; He was my death enemy, trying to wrest from me my rule over man and make mankind eternally happy in His fellowship; but now all is over with Him; He is conquered. How well I succeeded in working up sentiment against Him among the leading Jews, until they finally put Him out of the way! Judas, Caiphas, Pilate, the soldiers, they all had to serve me in carrying my will into effect. Now that this Jesus lies in the grave, He will have to remain in it forever, and the whole human race will be mine into all eternity; it will be a long time before any one will again dare to try his hand against me". What do you think of the devil's argument? If perchance the Savior remains in the tomb, then we are and will ever be lost and condemned creatures, and have nothing to look forward to after death but eternal condemnation in hell.—

But thanks be to God, the Savior did not stay in the grave. High above death and the devil stood Almighty God. He laughed, and held those foolish men in derision, when they wanted to make the grave secure by fastening a string across the stone before its entrance and impressed their seal upon it; He laughed, and held in derision, death and the devil, and said to all three of them, "You laughed too soon; for the time being I still exist, and I shall lead My Son out of the grave as Victor in such a way as to fill you with feelings of terror".

At first it did not look that way. The grave remained closed and the guards were standing in front of it. Saturday passed by, as did also the following night. The soldiers were constantly on the lookout; but no disciple showed himself, nor did any one else make an attempt to rob the body of Jesus. However, on Sunday morning, just at sun-rise,

something unheard of took place. The earth quaked, the rocks were rent, there were peals of thunder, and flashes of lightning darted from the skies right in front of the guards. They were knocked to the ground by the lightning and for a moment lay there as if they were dead. And when they regained their senses, no power on earth could have kept them at the grave a minute longer. They fled in the greatest haste, straight toward the city. They were not to be granted the privilege of seeing the wonderful event that now happened. An angel descended from heaven, arrayed in garments as bright as the brightest flashes of lightning, and with a powerful hand removed the heavy stone from the entrance to the grave. And at that very moment Jesus came out of the grave in His glorified body. The seal and the soldiers had not been able to keep Him there. No human eye witnessed His coming forth; it was seen only by the angels of heaven. Just as they had been witnesses of His wonderful birth, so they were to witness His glorious resurrection. If on the former occasion they had sung, "Glory to God in the highest", they now sang glory to Him all the more, because the great work of redemption was finished. Now they sang in triumph, "Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". For now it was made manifest that death and the devil, too, was conquered, that Jesus, in spite of death and the grave, had not suffered defeat in that greatest of all battles, but remained Victor. The evil will and counsel of the devil and of the leading Jews was frustrated and brought to naught, the head of the serpent was bruised and crushed, mankind was set free.

But from whom have we received all this information if no human eye witnessed the resurrection of Jesus? We have received it from the angels, who saw Jesus rise from the dead. We also know of the Lord's resurrection through Himself, because after He had risen He appeared to His dis-

ciples repeatedly, and not only talked with them, but also ate and drank in their presence, so that they might be altogether sure of the fact that He is risen. The first news of the Lord's resurrection was published by the angels; they made it known to a number of devout women on Easter morning. Very early on that momentous morning these women walked out to the grave of Jesus with the intention of anointing His body more carefully than this could be done on Friday evening. They wanted to put more aromatic herbs and scented powders into the linen sheet that was wrapped around the Lord's body, and also strew these herbs around in the vault, so as to counteract any unpleasant odor that might arise from the body of Jesus when it should begin to decay, as they supposed it would. On Good Friday evening things had to be attended to in a great hurry, so that they desired to improve upon what had been done to the Lord's body at the time of its burial. Then, too, they longed to see Him once more and weep at His grave. Not until they had come near to the place where Jesus' body lay did it occur to them that they probably would not be able to enter the sepulchre at all on account of the large stone that had been placed before its entrance. They said to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" But, on looking up, they saw that the stone was already rolled back. Since the tomb was open, they went into it and saw an angel sitting at their right, clad in a long white robe. When they saw him, they were amazed; but the angel said to them, "Be not amazed, you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is not here; He is risen. Go and tell it to His disciples". So the angel had told them most clearly, "He is risen". They, of course, could not as yet realize it. The message was too great to be fully grasped by them; for they had not given the resurrection of Jesus the remotest thought, but imagined that He had once and for all times ended in death. They naturally left the grave in

great confusion; what they had seen and heard filled their hearts with fear, and yet they were also in a state of joy, since they had to say to themselves, "If the angel is right in what he has said, we are of all people in the world the happiest; for we have our Savior back, our best Friend and our heavenly Helper".

Mary Magdalene, who was among these women when they started for the grave of Jesus on Easter morning, hastened back to the city when they noticed that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb of Jesus. But afterwards she went out to the grave again, not being able to find rest anywhere else. So she sat down at the entrance to the grave and wept. Then she cast a glance into the grave, and saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. These angels said to her in the most friendly tone, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She answered, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have laid Him". Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but did not know that it was Jesus. He asked her, "Woman, why weepest thou, and whom art thou seeking?" She, thinking that He was the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if Thou art the one who has taken my Savior away; tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will go and get Him". Then Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She, turning about and beholding Him, replied, "Rabboni!" which means, "Teacher!" Jesus said to her, "Touch Me not; but go to My brethren and tell them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; unto My God and your God". Oh, how glad she was then! She had seen her beloved Master, and He had talked to her. Of course, she could not fully grasp the meaning of all that He had said to her, but that did not lessen her joy. Never had she been so overwhelmingly happy. As fast as her feet would carry her she now ran to see the disciples, in order to break the news to them. "I have seen the Lord!" she called to them from afar; she could not tell

them soon enough, because she wanted them to share her great joy and bliss.

Later, all the disciples saw Jesus and heard Him often. So there can be no doubt, Jesus has risen from the dead. And because He has risen, He can also be with us, hear us when we pray, and help us when we call upon Him. A Savior who remained in the grave would avail us nothing. But Jesus arose again from the tomb, to be with us always, in life and in death, comforting us with His reassuring words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die". With Him near us, we do not even need to dread being laid in the grave, since we know that it will not be able to hold us, that on the strength of the Lord's resurrection we also shall be raised from the dead, that we shall live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, like as He has risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

"Jesus lives! no longer now
Can thy terrors, death, appal us;
Jesus lives! by this we know
From the grave He will recall us.
Brighter scenes will there commence!
This shall be my confidence."

20. How Jesus Is Desirous of Helping Even the Most Depraved Sinners if They Will But Come to Him.

During the time of our Savior's sufferings and death, His disciples most grievously sinned against Him. They not only forsook Him at the critical moment when He was being taken captive in the garden of Gethsemane, but also lost faith in Him and no longer regarded Him as the promised

Savior. One of their number was particularly guilty in this respect. I have reference to Simon Peter. Three times he denied his Lord and Master, saying, "I know not the man". In doing so, he even cursed and swore. That was indeed a very grave sin. Only think of it, for three years he had been a disciple of Jesus and repeatedly said, "We believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God", and now, when for the first time he is in a position to show that he is the Lord's disciple indeed, he declares repeatedly, at last amid oaths and curses, "I know not this man". Did the disciples, did Peter in particular, receive forgiveness for this grievous sin, did the Lord accept them again as His disciples after He had risen from the dead? Surely they had not deserved it; Simon Peter, especially, had deserved something quite different. He would only have received his dues if Jesus had returned the compliments and said of him, "I know not this man, this Simon Peter, nor will I have anything more to do with him". But did Jesus say or do anything of the kind? No, on the contrary, hardly had He risen from the dead when He already appeared to His disciples, forgave them their unbelief and again received them into fellowship with Himself. He did not even treat Peter as a castaway, but this disciple was one of the first ones to whom He appeared, in order to assure him that He was not going to condemn him on account of his shameful denial, but once more make him the recipient of His pardoning grace. Thus did the risen Christ give actual proof of His desire to pardon even the gravest offenders. In this way He acted quite in accord with what He had expressly said some time before His death and resurrection. I must indeed tell you this morning **how Jesus is desirous of helping even the greatest and most depraved sinners if they will but come to Him.**

Once a lot of publicans and sinners came to Jesus, in order that they might hear Him preach. The publicans were the Roman tax-collectors, who often exacted more from the

people than the emperor demanded, and let all such excess charges disappear into their own pockets. Consequently, they played the role of cheaters, and they were heartless cheaters at that, who did not stop to reflect whether the people upon whom they practiced their fraud were poor or rich, able to pay such high taxes or not, but in every case insisted that their exorbitant charges be paid. No wonder if for this reason everybody despised them. Together with these publicans came the "sinners". The publicans also were sinners, and the same may be said of all men, even of the best ones among them. But here are meant notorious sinners, who practiced all sorts of sins and vices so openly that everybody talked about them and pointed at them with the finger, saying, "There they are, those tough cases!" Those who had any self-respect, or valued their good name, would not be seen with them. Such publicans and sinners, then, drew near to Jesus. A ray of His love and friendliness had fallen into their hearts and given them courage to come to Him. They thought, "He will be able to help even us; He will even forgive us our sins and lift us out of the mire of our wickedness". It was with this hope and trust in their hearts that they came to Jesus.

Under these circumstances, what was Jesus to do? Was He to reject them and say, "No, I will have nothing to do with you; people who have gone wrong to such an extent as you have. are beyond hope anyway". Jesus could not have spoken thus, children, since it would have been contrary to His very nature. His heart yearned to save even the flagrant sinners. He had come into the world for the very purpose of seeking and saving that which was lost. With Him it was, therefore, a matter of course to receive those sinners; it would have been, in His own eyes, a denial of His saving love and rescuing mission if He had ordered them away from His presence. They were indeed great and flagrant sinners, but had He not come into the world to be the Savior of **all** sinners? Not only

the small, but also the great and depraved sinners were to find in Him an anchor of hope. If anything, He would give the latter class of sinners His special attention, since they needed Him most. So He received these publicans and sinners and ate with them, let them eat at the same table with Him, thus receiving them into the closest communion with Him, and opening His heart to them, so that they might see, taste and experience something of that love which covers a multitude of sins, even the greatest ones. It was simply a matter of course with Him. He could not have acted otherwise and remained true to Himself.

The scribes and Pharisees, however, took a different view of the matter. When they saw Jesus receive those publicans and sinners, even going so far as to sit down at the same table and eat with them, they murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them". You have already heard something about these scribes and Pharisees; you know that they were a conceited and self-righteous set of people, considering themselves much better than other folks, assuming to be the only ones who had a correct understanding of the law and lived in perfect obedience to it. They could not understand why Jesus should desire to have anything to do with these publicans and sinners; they thought if He really were the promised Savior, the true leader of His people, He would have to do as they did; they, however, always went a round-about way if thereby they could avoid meeting any of these publicans and sinners; if for any reason they were unable to evade them, they gave them only a cold stare of contempt, or even pulled their long loose garments more closely around themselves, so that their very clothes might not come in contact with those despised people and thereby be polluted. Jesus thought, "I belong where there are sinners, in order that I may help them": the scribes and Pharisees thought, "No, people who have sunk to such depths must remain there; they are beyond redemption, and it is their own

fault; why did they not guard themselves better, and keep in the paths of righteousness?" For them it was a matter of course to let those publicans and sinners where they were, in the depths of sin and degradation.

What was Jesus to do when He saw the thoughts of these Pharisees and heard their murmurings? Was He, on their account, to withdraw from those publicans and sinners or banish them from His presence? No, if He had done that, we would know that those who have committed great and grievous sins can not hope to find forgiveness with Him, that He is but a Savior for the small sinners, or even only for the righteous and holy. This would at once rob us of all the joy that we find in coming to Jesus; for He is our real Joy and Comfort only if we may believe that He also receives the great and flagrant sinners. Therefore, children, see and hear what the Savior did when He heard the murmurings of those scribes and Pharisees. He did not order the publicans and sinners to leave Him, nor did He so much as move a little away from them; no, He continued to remain with them at the table, raised His hand as if to shield them, and defended His love for sinners in such a masterly way that the Pharisees had to hold their peace. What He did, was to tell them a story from which they could learn that with Him it is simply a matter of course to receive even the most debased sinner and to rejoice in his conversion. It was the story of the prodigal son, and these were its main features:

A man had two sons. He had not kept them close in the days of their youth, for he was a man of wealth, having large fields and herds, servants and day laborers, and he was not stingy, but showed himself generous toward his two boys and liked to see them enjoy themselves in a wholesome way. One should, therefore, think that they would have been very closely attached to their home, and would have liked nothing better than to stay with their good father. Their happiness really seemed to be complete; in no respect were

they deprived of anything. And yet, the younger son was not contented; he did not feel free enough in his father's house, he longed to be away from home, far away, where he would no longer have to be concerned about doing the will of his father, but could be his own master and do as he pleased. How long he nourished these evil thoughts, I am unable to say; but the longer he harbored them, the greater became their power over him. More and more he felt cramped in his father's house and imagined that he would be much more contented away from home. So one day he decided to make his desires known to his father. He said to him, "Give me my share of the inheritance". He thus showed himself devoid of love, inasmuch as the love of his father found no response in his heart. He thus showed himself ungrateful, for he had forgotten all the good that his father had done him from his earliest infancy until he was a grown-up young man. He thus showed himself greedy, because he wanted his share of the inheritance even before his father was dead. He thus showed himself imputent, since he demanded what was not yet coming to him, as long as his father was still alive. The demand of the son was the gravest kind of sin, it was rebellion against his father and thus also against God, who has given us the fourth commandment and expects us to obey it. Did the father, then, give his son a good scolding and admonish him to be obedient? Not at all. Without saying a word, he divided all his money and other property into two parts and gave the one part to his younger son. Why did the father do this? He had his reasons. The son's disregard for his father and his greediness to be in immediate possession of his inheritance would only have grown stronger, even though he had outwardly submitted to his father's word and will. If he was to become a different man, it was necessary for him first to have his own way and find out to what that leads.

Soon after the division of the property, the younger son took all that he had received for his share and went into a distant land. There he would not need to meet his father any more, there he would not have to feel disturbed by the sad look in his father's eyes, there he would be altogether free and able to conduct himself in accordance with the desire of his own heart. In that far off country he spent all his money by leading a dissolute life. He fared sumptuously all day and way into the night. Since he spent his money freely, he gained many boon companions, with whom he gambled, whose bills he paid, and whose shameless sins he shared. Day after day, week after week, flew by in sheer pleasure and enjoyment. No wonder he forgot all about home, no wonder, either, that his money swiftly decreased, and that before very long his purse was altogether empty. Now what was he to do in that strange country? His dissolute friends all abandoned him, since they had only sought his company because he had money and paid for their amusements. So he found himself quite alone, a stranger in a strange land. To make bad matters worse, a famine swept over that country, so that he suffered want and hunger. He had come to be a lost son. Since he had no other choice, he hired out to a farmer. He got no wages, but had to be glad to work for his board. His employer sent him out into the field to herd swine. That was degrading work, doubly so to this young man, since he was a Jew; for to the Jews swine are unclean animals in a special sense of the term, and pork is something they are not permitted to eat. Still, the young man submitted to this kind of work, for he wanted to have something to satisfy his gnawing hunger. The first half day passed by, and at noon he thought he would be given a good square meal; but he was disappointed. The farmer was a tight-fisted fellow and cheated him. He made him work, but would give him nothing to eat. The next day brought no change for the better, the same story repeated itself on this and all the days following.

To satisfy his hunger, the young man ate with the swine, which were fed with pods that grow on the carob-tree. These pods were a miserable kind of food, containing very little nutriment, serving merely to fill the stomach. Only in times of extreme need did people take to devouring these "husks that the swine did eat". Thus it will be seen that the prodigal son had by his sin been reduced even to bodily want. God sometimes allows this in order to make a man come to himself, and cause him to reflect on his sin. In the case of the prodigal son He accomplished this purpose. When mealtime came and the young man sat there beside the trough, and tried to fill his stomach with the "husks that the swine did eat", so as to keep it from aching, there were revived in his memory scenes of the paternal house, which he had so ungratefully abandoned and forgotten. In imagination he saw the servants of his father sitting before steaming dishes and eating to their hearts' content, so that more than once he was prompted to say to himself, "How many of my father's hired men have more bread than they can eat, while I am starving to death".

But other thoughts also busied his mind. He began to realize how loveless, ungrateful, greedy and impudent he had been over against his good father, and that he had not found the happiness that he sought outside of his father's house. While herding the swine he had plenty of leisure to think of all these things, and the more thinking he did, the greater his sin appeared to him, the more he rued it; and many a tear may have trickled down his cheeks as he sat there on the open plains. Those were tears of sorrow and repentance. Sometimes he felt like jumping up and starting for home, but the impulse would soon pass away again, because he felt constrained to say to himself, "I have sinned beyond all measure, I have offended my good father too grievously, I have stamped out the last spark of love that his heart contained for me, he will not forgive me the evil that I have

done, he will drive me away from his door, should I venture to return to him". But the impulse to go back to his father came over him again and again, each time with greater force. The longing for home increased in proportion to the growth of his hunger and want. If he waited much longer, he would perish with hunger. At last he came to a conclusion. Said he to himself, "My father always was so good and kind to me; perhaps he will at least have pity on me and accept me as a servant, now that I can not hope to be recognized by him as his son". As this thought developed in his mind, he again found it possible to hope in his father's grace and mercy. His heart now assumes an attitude of trust, and suddenly he jumps to his feet there on the lonely plains, and in a firm tone of voice exclaims, "I will rise and go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against thee. I am no longer worthy to be called thy son; make me one of thy hired servants'". He takes the herd of swine back to its owner, and immediately starts out on his way home.

He walks along at a rapid gate, spurned on by hunger as well as by the longing to be at home once more. But the nearer he drew to his father's house, the smaller his steps grew and the more slowly they followed each other. The thought of his sins again asserted itself and made him feel depressed. Again he asked, "Will my father forgive me, will he accept me as one of his hired servants, seeing that I have deserved to be driven from his door without mercy? Would it be surprising if even the last spark of love for me had died in his paternal heart?" But once more he overcomes these thoughts and doubts. He again ventures to trust in his father's mercy and moves on until he reaches the end of his journey. There ahead of him stands his father's house. Some one is out in the yard. Could it be his father? Yes, it is he. It seems to the son as if he could detect in his father's eyes something of the old parental love. Indeed, the father has recognized the son and is coming to meet him. Nothing

can keep the son back now, he rushes ahead, the father meeting him half way. But before he can throw himself down before him and clasp his knees, the father has embraced him and kissed him on his lips. And as the son thus lies on his father's breast, he realizes that his father's love has not grown cold in spite of all the sorrow he has caused him by his sin and waywardness. O blessed assurance! Now the son can say with still deeper reason, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight; I am not worthy to be called thy son". He breaks off here. He says nothing now of becoming a hired man in his father's house, the love of his father having become so convincingly demonstrated to him by the father himself that he would have felt it to be an unjustified expression of doubt in his father's love now to breathe a word about his being made one of his hired servants. The son had indeed acted upon the right impulse; for immediately his father's love burst forth like a stream that for a long time has been held back and now rushes along with irresistible force. The father said to the servants, "Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry; for this my son was dead, and he is alive again; he was lost, and is found". The son says to the father, "I am not worthy to be called thy son", but the father hastens to have him dressed and ornamented in a way befitting one who is indeed a son of his house; he does not content himself with disrobing him of his tattered and torn clothes which gave him the appearance of a beggar, but he orders the **best** garment to be brought forth and put on him, so that everybody, above all the son himself, may be given an unmistakable sign of the warm place he has regained in the heart and home of his father. For the same reason he has them put on his finger a ring, which at that time was, more than anything else, the mark of free people and their sons. Down to his shoes his wearing apparel is

to be entirely new, so that there may not be even a vestige of anything left to remind one of his former life away from his father's house. The father's love fairly outdid itself, and ordered everything to be done in such a way as if it had been a matter of course. Finally, it is the father's desire to have all the inmates of his house take part in the joy over his son's happy return. So he goes on to say, "Bring the fatted calf, which has been kept in reserve for special days of joy and festivity, prepare a feast right now, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was to me as if he had been dead, but he has, as it were, come to life again, he was as one utterly lost, and, lo, he is found". And they began to be merry, the father himself above all others.

This, children, was the first part of the story which Jesus told to those murmuring scribes and Pharisees. It had for its purpose the defence of His love toward sinners. By means of this story, Jesus, as it were, spread His protecting hands over those publicans and sinners, while to the Pharisees it said in unmistakable terms, "It has made you murmur to see Me receive sinners and to sit at meat with them; you criticise Me for rejoicing in their desire to commune with Me; you are of the opinion that I should have said to them, 'No, you have gone too far, I have nothing left for you'. And it is true, they have been exceedingly bad and wicked, they have gone into the mire of sin to such depths that they do not deserve being graciously received by Me; they themselves know this perfectly well. But now that they have come to Me with such perfect faith in My love and pardoning grace, now that they so implicitly trust in My readiness not to deal with them according to what they would have merited, am I now to cast them out, to banish them from My presence? Is it not, on the contrary, the proper thing for Me to deal with them as the father in this story dealt with his son, to whom he showed convincingly that his love for him was still alive, and whom he rejoiced to welcome at his return? As the love

of the father had not been destroyed by the grievous sins of his son, so My love toward these publicans and sinners, to whom I am related as Savior, has not become extinct because of their sins. It was a matter of course with that father to receive his ragged but rueful son upon his return; it would have appeared to him as a denial of his paternal love, had he rejected him. In like manner it is with Me a matter of course to receive these publicans and sinners, however grievous their sins may have been; to cast them out, would seem to Me like a denial of the love which I, as Savior, cherish for those who need to be saved; for I came into the world for the very purpose of seeking and saving that which was lost".

"And," the Savior continued, "if you still persist in your murmuring, then let Me also tell you the second part of this story; pay close attention, you scribes and Pharisees, since what I shall say now may be of special worth to you." The continuation of the story was as follows: When the younger son returned to his father's house, the older son, who had never left the parental home, just happened to be out in the field, in order to supervise the work of the servants. Now when he returned from the field and drew near the house, he heard music and dancing, and, calling one of the servants, asked him what these things might be, what all this merry-making was about. The servant told him, "Thy brother has come, and thy father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound". This made the older son angry, and he would not go into the house; so his father went out to him and entreated him. The older son, however, replied sullenly, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as thy younger son was come, who has devoured thy living by leading a dissolute life, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf". Then the father persuaded him in the kindliest way, saying, "My son, thou art ever with

me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; we simply could not help rejoicing; it was with us a matter of course, and we could not have acted differently; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found. Do come in and be glad with us".

The lesson which the Pharisees were to learn from this second half of the story is obvious. Jesus could have said to them, at the conclusion of the story, "Now, you Pharisees, do you really want to be like this older brother? It is true, you have remained with the people of God and have not sinned so openly as these publicans and sinners; but if you continue in your murmuring, you will thereby show that in spite of your staying in the Father's house, you have not yet learned to understand the Father's mind, that you have no sense of appreciation for the true nature of the Savior, with reference to whom Isaiah prophesied, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool'. It is in accordance with My very nature as Savior to act toward these publicans and sinners as I did; it is a matter of course with Me to receive even the most grievous sinners if they come to Me, firmly trusting that I will grant them forgiveness; to seek and to save that which was lost, is My calling, the duties of which I can not but fulfill. Murmur not because I have received these publicans and sinners and am rejoicing with them; come, rather, join our company and thank God with Me that these men, who to Me and My heavenly Father were as dead, are alive again, that they who were lost have been found".

Children, could the Savior have told us any better and more plainly that He is desirous of helping even the greatest and most depraved sinners if they will but come to Him with a sincere longing to have their sins forgiven, and with the firm confidence that He will grant them His pardoning grace? Ah, but this is a blessed truth! As yet, you may not be able

fully to understand it, but you will learn better to appreciate its value as you become more advanced in years. May the faithful God, whose children you became in holy baptism, so shield you that you will ever remain His own. May you rest secure under the shadow of His wing. May He guard you as the chicken does her young when the hawk appears. But if at any time you should cease to be God's children, if you should ever forsake your heavenly Father and your Savior Jesus Christ, if you should glide from the paths of righteousness and fall into the depths of sin, remember this: the Savior wants to help even the greatest of sinners if they will but come to Him. In the story of the prodigal son He has assured us of this in the most appealing way; after His resurrection He again accepted His disciples, even Peter, and forgave them their grievous sins. He will also receive you, if you will but come to Him and firmly believe that He will not cast you out. O children, what a Savior we have in Jesus! He laid down His life for us, He arose again from the dead for our benefit, and He is now our living Savior, ready to receive us into fellowship with Him if we will but heed His call and come to Him; even in the case of the greatest sinners He makes good His promise, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out". Now no one needs to despair of his sin and exclaim, "My sins are too grievous to be forgiven". On the contrary, he may comfort his soul by remembering this:

"Though great our sins and sore our woes,
His grace much more aboundeth;
His helping love no limit knows,
Our utmost needs it soundeth.
Our kind and faithful Shepherd He,
Who shall at last set Israel free
From all their sin and sorrow."

21. How Jesus Taught Us Whom to Recognize and Treat as Our Neighbor, Especially in Time of Need.

A young man to whom we are indebted for a number of beautiful hymns that have found their way into our hymn books and are being sung by us even today, once saw a picture of the Savior, in which He is represented as wearing a crown of thorns, and underneath of which one reads the inscription, "This did I for thee; what dost thou do for Me?" He was deeply impressed by these words and for a long time could not help thinking about them. He said to himself, "Surely it was for my sake that the Savior wore a crown of thorns and laid down His life upon the altar of the cross; should I not, therefore, show myself grateful to Him and devote my whole life to His service?" He began to see that our catechism is right when in the explanation of the second article it defines the purpose of the Savior's redeeming work as follows: "In order that I might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him". And, having come to a fuller understanding of these words, he most earnestly endeavored to dedicate his entire life to the service of God and the Savior Jesus Christ.—We, children, have but recently celebrated Good Friday and Easter. We have heard anew all that our Savior did and suffered for our sake. It has been my privilege to tell you in brief how on Good Friday He, as the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for us. Now we also hear from the Savior's lips the appealing words, "This did I for thee; what dost thou do for Me?" In order that you may make the right kind of reply to this searching question, let me tell you today **how Jesus taught us whom to recognize and treat as our neighbor, especially in time of need.**

One day a scribe came to Jesus. He was a man who, like many others of his class, had made a thorough study of the Bible. He was quite well at home in the Old Testament.

What he had studied most, was the laws of Moses. The scribes were indeed considered as competent to decide all questions of right or wrong, according to the standard of the Mosaic law. This particular scribe, therefore, did not come to Jesus for the purpose of being instructed by Him. He only wanted to tempt Jesus, or set a trap for Him, hoping that He would be caught in it. By starting a discussion with Jesus, he thought he would be able to make Him say something contrary to the law, as understood and interpreted by the learned teachers of the people. In this event, he was going to see to it that Jesus was put under arrest and condemned as a false prophet. We know from the stories that we have already heard that the scribes were very hostily disposed toward Jesus and ever tried to catch Him in His public addresses. If the scribe of whom I am telling you just now did not go to this limit in his evil intentions, he at least wanted to put Jesus to a test and find out how much He really knew about the various questions pertaining to the law of Moses and the way that leads to eternal life in heaven. So He approached Jesus and asked Him this question: "Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He pretended not to know the way to heaven, and acted as if he would be only too willing to enter upon that way if some one pointed it out to him. But Jesus knew better. He said to the scribe, "What is that? Dost thou not know the law of Moses? Hast thou not learned the word of God that tells thee most plainly what thou must do to inherit eternal life? What, then, is written in the law? How readest thou?" The scribe indeed knew the answer to this question, and made the following reply, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself". With these words of Scripture the scribe had in reality given a correct description of the way to heaven. It is true, the Scriptures in other passages speak of faith as being necessary to one's salvation. But

faith is implied in the demand that one should love God, since one who does not believe in God will not love Him either. In order to love God with all our heart, we must believe in Him with all our heart. True love without faith is unthinkable. So Jesus agreed to the answer of the scribe, and said to him, "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live, that is, enter heaven and there inherit eternal life". He could have added, "Thou hast thus shown that the way to eternal life is well known to thee, that thou dost not lack the correct knowledge concerning the way that leads to heaven. Now, only make use of thy knowledge, enter upon the way to eternal life which thou hast so correctly described according to the Scriptures, so that thou mayest not miss the blessed goal". The scribe stood there now like a school-boy who has asked a foolish question. This situation was, of course, not much to his taste. He did not want the people to think that Jesus had outwitted him. So in order to re-establish his prestige as a learned teacher of the law, he wanted to justify himself and show that the whole matter was not yet fully decided, that there were still many things to be taken into consideration. Thus, one would have to know whom to regard as his neighbor, in order to love him as oneself, and help him in time of need. Otherwise one might love and help the wrong person, in which event all love and help would be wasted. And what a pity that would be! The scribe therefore said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor? Tell me this, if Thou art indeed a master in Israel, so that I may know for sure whom to love as myself and whom to lend help in time of need. Loving and helping my neighbor is not the first thing to be considered. I must first know who is my neighbor, or all my loving and helping will profit me nothing, will not take me to heaven, will not result in my inheriting eternal life. It will be necessary, first of all, to find an unmistakable answer to the question, 'Who is my neighbor?'" The scribe, it appears, would have liked nothing better than

to involve Jesus in a learned disputation. He was far more interested in knowing than in doing the law, and it afforded him the keenest delight to debate on the more subtile questions pertaining to it. However, Jesus did not favor his desire by entering into a lengthy and learned debate with him. While He answered his question, "Who is my neighbor?" He did not do it in the form of a learned disputation, but by telling him a story taken from actual life, a story which at the same time said to the scribe in a way not to be misunderstood, "Do not stop to discuss at length the question as to whom thou mayest consider thy neighbor, but go at once and help most anyone who may come thy way and be in need of thy assistance".

The story which Jesus told the scribe runs thus: Thou, O my opponent, knowest the way that leads from Jerusalem down to Jericho, the high rocks which reflect the rays of the sun and thus help to intensify the heat, making it almost unbearable to the wanderer who has to travel on that way. Thou knowest that part of the road which is called the valley of murder, that tree- and shrubless stretch, where so much innocent blood has been shed by the robbers who haunt those uncanny regions. Thou knowest how the cleft rocks tower to the skies there, and what deep ravines lie between them, ravines down into which the wanderer can not look without shuddering. As he descends into them, the sound of his footsteps is re-echoed from the barren rocks to the right and to the left of his path, so that the robbers learn of his approach without emerging from their hiding-place. The road there borders right on the Judaean wilderness. Thus it is made easy for the robbers and thieves to ply their evil profession. Suddenly they sally forth, attack the wanderer, rob him of his possessions, and then disappear in the wilderness beyond the hills, where nobody can find them. Thou knowest how many have been overpowered, stripped of their belongings

and even put to death on that part of the way from Jerusalem to Jericho.

After these introductory remarks, Jesus continued to say, On this lonely, forsaken and dangerous road a man one day went from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and fell among the robbers. They stripped him of his garments, took away his money, and knocked him down. Leaving him there more dead than alive, they took their booty and disappeared across the hills. Miserably beaten, covered with wounds and blood, the poor man lay there on the way. The hot rays of the sun fell upon his prostrate body; the flies and other insects lighted upon his burning wounds; his tongue became parched and his dry lips sighed for water; he was seized with a fever that shook his body from head to toe. But no helper drew near. At last the prostrate man heard the echoing sounds of foot-steps; they were coming nearer to him; raising his head just high enough, he saw the form of a priest move along. He had recognized him by his garments. Then his eyes started to glisten. He thought, "This is a servant of God who is just returning from his sacred service in the temple at Jerusalem; he most surely has learned from his God to be merciful and will come to my rescue". As loud as his feeble voice would permit he pleaded, "Oh, have mercy upon me, help me!" The priest heard the feeble cry; it startled him; looking in the direction from which it came, he saw the wounded man lying in a pool of blood, and realized that he was in need of immediate help. But the very next moment he also began to glance about most timidly. The place was indeed uncanny and dangerous. "Who knows," thought he, "but that the robbers are still lurking back of those high walls of rock? Who can tell whether the unfortunate man is not too badly hurt, anyway, to recover?" Under such conditions, was he to remain where he was and risk his own life in the attempt to save that of another, who, besides, might be mortally wounded and quite beyond the possibility

of being rescued? "No, discretion is the better part of valor," thought he. "I must hurry away from here. There in Jericho is my home; hours of sweet rest await me at my destination; long enough have I been on duty in the temple; then, too, this wounded man may not be worthy of any assistance that I could lend him; he is a total stranger to me; who knows but what he may have an unsavory history? Away from here! I must not linger another moment." Thus the priest choked the voice of pity in his heart and put his conscience to sleep. The poor wounded man, however, dropped his weary head in despair. He almost fainted away from sheer exhaustion. Without being able to stir, he lay there for a long time. Then he again heard foot-steps. Was it somebody this time that would help him? Slowly his hopes were revived. Unfortunately, his voice had grown so weak that he could scarcely speak above a whisper. But he summoned all the strength he had left and cried in a pitiful tone, "Help me!" The one to whom he addressed his cry was a Levite. He likewise came from the temple at Jerusalem, where he had rendered service, and was on his way to Jericho, his place of residence. He had learned enough about the mercy of God, and knew full well the Bible passage, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". Would he now act in accordance with his knowledge, follow God's example, have mercy upon the unfortunate man and help him out of his extremely critical situation? One should think so. How would it be possible for him henceforth to serve in the house of God if he so far forgot God and ignored the voice of his enlightened conscience as not to show mercy in response to the wounded man's pitiful plea, "Help me! help me!"? And yet, he left this urgent appeal unheeded. He behaved toward this unfortunate man as if the latter were not his neighbor, or as if knowing and doing God's commandment were two different things. He saw the poor victim of the robbers lie there in peril of death, and heard his appealing cry for aid, but he passed by without a moment's

hesitation, and even increased his speed, fearing for the safety of his own life. Soon he, too, was out of sight and hearing. All was still again in the valley of murder. The sun was about to disappear on the western horizon. The flies were monotonously buzzing about the wounded man. Once more he thinks of his dear ones at home, perhaps also of his God. Then he loses consciousness. Soon he will, in all probability, breathe his last.

Just then, however, a third traveller comes along, not on foot, like the priest and the Levite, but on a mule. Evidently he is a merchant who has been in Jerusalem on business and is now on his way home. The wounded man on the road neither hears nor sees the rider as he approaches; but the rider, who, by the way, lived in the province of Samaria and therefore was called a Samaritan, noticed the poor wounded man lying there in a dying condition. It was a sight that moved him to pity, and he had only one thought: I must help him. The thought was immediately followed by the deed. Without a moment's hesitation he alighted from his mule, tied it to a tree, and went up to the unfortunate man. Here he kneels down beside him in the sand, and views his face at close range. How pale and ghastly it looks! The eyes of the man are closed, he appears to be dead. The Samaritan stoops over him still farther and puts his ear to his breast. He finds that his heart is still beating, though very weakly. So there's still life in the man, and where there's life there's hope. It is not yet too late to help him. "But, Samaritan, canst thou afford to be detained here? If thou dost not continue on thy way without interruption, thou wilt not reach home any more tonight. Then, what will thy wife and children think? Will they not fear that some misfortune has befallen thee?" Something within him talked in this strain; but he suppressed all such suggestions and said to himself, "Whether I am detained or not, this man must be helped, and helped at once". Again that inner voice asserts

itself, saying, "But listen, thou art risking thy own life. Could it not be that one of the robbers is still lurking back of those rocks? Suppose that he should pounce upon thee whilst thou art busying thyself with this half dead man?" However, this also makes no impression upon him. He realizes that the robbers may take advantage of the situation and make him the second victim of their marauding, even to the extent of knocking him down at an opportune moment; but just now he is not concerned about himself and his own safety, his whole attention is directed toward the stranger who so urgently needs his help. That inner voice even now does not give up the battle. It says to him, "This man has no claim on thee, thou art not under obligation to risk thy own life in making an uncertain attempt at saving his; he is a total stranger to thee; in all probability he is a Jew, and thou art a Samaritan; ordinarily, the Jews will have nothing to do with the Samaritans, and here thou art about to run a heavy risk for such a Jew, who, under normal conditions, would scorn thee; when thou wast on thy way to Jerusalem, the Jews in such and such a village called thee hard names, and thou art about to save such a Jew's life? Go on! Who would be so foolish as all that?!" Yes, thus spoke the tempter to the Samaritan; but the latter did not heed the tempter's voice. Instead of that he listened to the voice of his conscience, which said to him, "If thou dost not help this man, he will die; and if he dies, thou wilt have to bear the blame, since thou art in a position to help him. It is not mere chance that has brought thee here just at this hour. Think of the poor man's need, do not ask who he is and whether he may ever be in a position to aid thee; he is now thy neighbor, and it is written in the law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'". And, behold, the love that was in his heart proved to be stronger than the tempter's voice. He did not lend his ear to it nearly so long as I have been talking about it to you. In less than

no time he brushed all objections aside and applied himself to the rescue of the unfortunate man by the wayside.

Out of his traveling bag he pulled forth two little bottles; his wife had been just careful enough to make him take them along for any emergency that might arise. How glad he was to have them at hand now! In the one bottle there was oil, in the other wine. With great care he examined the wounds of the beaten man and poured a little of the oil into them. That alleviated the pain and hindered the wounds from becoming more inflamed. Then he took the wine and with this pure liquid washed the dust out of the poor man's wounds before bandaging them. But where should he find cloth for the bandages? He took a piece of his own garments, tore it into strips and wound these around the wounded parts of the man's body. Carefully he moistened his dry lips, opened his mouth and poured a few drops of wine on his parched tongue. And God blessed his efforts. The half dead man regained consciousness. He opened his eyes. At first he grew a little nervous when he saw the strange man bending over him; but on looking into his friendly eyes and noticing how kindly he attended to his needs, he knew that he had nothing to fear of this man, that he was indeed his helper and had rescued him from death. As he became aware of this, new life stirred within him. The will to live re-asserted itself.—The next question was, how to get away from that uncanny place. The Samaritan let the wounded man take time to gain a little more strength; he waited until he was able to sit up straight. Then he brought his mule right close up to him, gently put his arm under his body and lifted him onto the mule's back. Now they moved along slowly, step by step, so as not to jar the injured man and set his wounds to aching. The friendly Samaritan with the compassionate heart walked beside the animal and supported the wounded rider. For hours the Samaritan was thus being detained, but he did not mind it as long as he was rescuing a man from

the very jaws of death and showing him the love that every man owes to his neighbor. At last, after several hours of slow travel, they arrived at the inn about midway between Jerusalem and Jericho, where there is an inn to be found even today. Here the good Samaritan gently laid the wounded man on a soft bed, had a bowl of soup prepared for him and gave it to him in spoonfuls. That was just what he needed; before long he fell into a healthy sleep, and sleep has well been called "nature's balmy restorer". Now, at last, the noble rescuer thought of his own need and took time to eat a bite. But no sooner had he thus refreshed himself than he again sat down beside the bed of his patient and staid with him all night. Even when morning came he did not regard his task as complete. He himself could not possibly stay with the wounded man any longer, but he took out two shillings, or as much as a man could at that time earn in two days. and gave them to the host saying, "Take care of him, and if thou shouldst spend any more on him until his recovery is complete, I will pay thee when I come back". Thus the Samaritan behaved toward one who to him was a perfect stranger, and who, besides, belonged to the outspoken enemies of his people. In this way he proved himself neighbor to him and fulfilled the commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself".

And this is the story by means of which Jesus answered the question of the scribe, "Who is my neighbor?" We call it the story of the good Samaritan. With this story, as an answer to the scribe's question, Jesus indeed hit the nail on the head. That is why the scribe grew less and less arrogant while Jesus was relating this story, and it would seem that he even felt just a little ashamed. Here there was a Samaritan who certainly knew far less about the law than he, the learned scribe, and yet did not stop to clear his mind on the question, "Who is my neighbor?" If he had debated this question with himself, he probably would have come to the

conclusion, "This man is not my neighbor; he is a total stranger to me, and a Jew besides, belonging to a people that treats us Samaritans with disdain"; and that unfortunate man would have perished in his helpless condition. But he said to himself, "Even though he is a perfect stranger to me, even though he belongs to those haughty Jews who despise my people, God has placed him in my way and brought him near to me, so that he is now my neighbor whom I must help". And how he did help him! He showed himself so sympathetic, so compassionate, so brave, so unselfish, so devoted and self-forgetful that one can not but be delighted with him. When Jesus finally asked the scribe, "Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?" the scribe could not help mentioning the right one; though he avoided saying in a straightforward manner, "The Samaritan!" he felt constrained at least to admit, "He that showed mercy on him". Jesus then said to him, "Go, and do thou likewise". He meant to say, "Do not waste a lot of time in disputing the question, 'Who is my neighbor?' but wherever thou seest anyone in need, hasten to help him, show thyself compassionate, place thyself at his service, put him on his feet again, and do not be afraid that thy help might benefit somebody who is not thy neighbor".

"This did I for thee; what dost thou do for Me?" Such was the inscription under the picture that represented Jesus with a crown of thorns upon His brow. Do you know that Jesus, in painting this remarkable word-picture of the good Samaritan, at the same time painted a striking picture of Himself? We, the people of the human race, were lying prostrate on the highway of life, wounded, stripped and beaten by the devil, who is a murderer from the beginning. But Jesus had compassion on us, and entered into a combat with the arch-foe of humanity. In this great combat He gave up His life for us and then, on the third day, He arose again from the dead. Now, by word and sacrament, He pours oil and wine

into our wounds, that we may be restored. If, however, He, as the Good Samaritan, risked His life to save us, if even today He bandages our wounds and carefully nurses us in the inn of His church, so as to restore us for all eternity, if He has done and still does all this for us, what shall we do to show ourselves appreciative of His infinite mercy and compassion? I will tell you, children: we must also, out of sheer gratitude, become good Samaritans. "How can we do this?" you ask. To be sure, you may not be called upon to pick up half dead people from the road, to bandage their bleeding wounds and take them to the inn. In fact, you are too young and small to undertake such a task. But you may be good Samaritans nevertheless. Think of the many children who have lost their parents and are left in this world homeless; can you not help on your part that they shall be taken into Christian homes or into our Christian orphanages, and that provision shall thus be made for their needs? Just open your saving banks and bring me the money which they contain, or a part of the money, so that I may send it to the orphanage and that it may help to support the little girls and boys who are there. Many a Sunday school is large enough and sufficiently able to bear the whole cost of feeding, clothing and educating at least one child at any one of our orphanages. Besides, think of our missions. Can you not be good Samaritans to the poor heathen, whom the devil has so sorely wounded? Do you not sing concerning them: "The heathen in their sore distress my deep compassion win; O Lord, regard their helplessness, for they are dead in sin"? Surely, you are able to do your share in supporting this noble cause. You may support it with your prayers, by calling upon God to send faithful missionaries to the heathen. You may also support it with your offerings, if you will but bring them to me from time to time and let me send them to the treasurer of our synod; for he will see to it that every penny you offer for missionary purposes is properly used. There are Sun-

day schools right here in our own country which have singly taken it upon themselves to support a missionary among the heathen. And why may there not be some among you whom God shall in His own time ask to serve Him as missionaries? Then it will be for you to say, "Here we are, Lord; send us". And you will become veritable good Samaritans to "the heathen in their sore distress". Finally, wherever you see anyone in need, help him. Do not stop to ask who he is. Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the poor that are cast out to thy house. So fear and love God as . . to help and befriend your neighbor in every bodily need. "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy," says our Savior. And again He, the crucified and resurrected Lord, appeals to us, saying, "This did I for thee; what dost thou do for Me?" Let this be our reply: "We shall follow Thy example and thank Thee for Thine infinite mercy by being merciful ourselves". And may the word be followed by the deed.

22. How It Is the Will of Jesus That We Forgive Those Who Sin Against Us.

Are there any dangerous petitions, children? Yes, there are petitions of this kind. It would be a dangerous petition if one of you were to address God, saying, "Dear God, let me grow real rich". For riches have led many a one into a multitude of sins. You would be giving vent to a dangerous petition if, while just recovering from a severe illness, you were to say to the doctor, "O dear doctor, let me go out of doors and play with the other children". For leaving the bed and the house too soon after one has been sick often causes a relapse and brings on death. One approaches God with a dangerous petition when he says to Him, "Dear Lord, make life easy for me by moving all difficulties out of my way". For any number of people have by such an easy life been prompted to forget their God and Savior, whereas trials and

tribulations tend to make one cling all the more firmly to His sustaining hand. While many other dangerous petitions might be mentioned, I shall only refer to one more. It may be found in the Lord's Prayer. And which petition is it? It is the fifth one: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us". How can this be a dangerous petition? Did not Jesus teach us to pray in this manner? In reply, it may be said that the petition in itself is not dangerous, but that it may easily grow dangerous by not being prayed in the right spirit. It all depends upon the kind of a person who voices this petition. Mark how the fifth petition reads: "Forgive us our trespasses, **as we forgive those who trespass against us".** It presupposes that we forgive those who in any way have injured or offended, and thereby sinned against us. But what if we do not forgive them? What if we bear them ill for months and years, instead of making up with them? Why, in this case we really are not able to pray the fifth petition, and if we pray it anyway, it grows dangerous, and may take on the meaning, "Do not forgive us our trespasses, as we do not forgive those who tresspass against us". What a terrible petition that would be! If God would grant it and deal with us accordingly, we would be of all men most miserable; for, children, if I could no longer receive forgiveness of sin from my God, I would not want to live any more either. Forgiveness of sin is for sinful man the greatest good in heaven and on earth. That is what we learned in connection with the story of the palsied man, and that is what we are also taught by our own conscience. How the publicans and sinners rejoiced when Jesus received them and forgave them their sin! How grateful the prodigal son was when his father had forgiven him! Going farther back, we find the words of the Psalmist, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered". Consequently, we incur the danger of losing our greatest good if we do not forgive those who have injured, offended or in

any way sinned against us. It is wrong to suppose that we can merit God's forgiveness by forgiving those who have offended us, nor do we pray in this petition that God would forgive us only in proportion to the forgiveness that we grant to others; yet this much remains true: praying the fifth petition is an act of hypocrisy with us if we are unforgiving over against those who have injured or offended us. Those who wish to pray this petition acceptably must be disciples of Jesus, among whom the virtue of forgiving one another is practiced as a matter of course. To forgive those who have sinned against us, is, therefore, a lesson that we can not learn too well. May it be brought home to us this morning with special force as I undertake to tell you **how it is the will of Jesus that we forgive those who sin against us.**

One day Peter came to Jesus and said, "Lord, how often must I forgive my brother who sins against me? Is it enough to forgive him seven times?" Peter understood that, as a disciple of Jesus, one must be ready to forgive those who injure or offend him, but he was of the opinion that a limit existed beyond which the practice of granting forgiveness should not be extended. The Jewish teachers had indeed fixed the rule: "Three times one must forgive, but not oftener; after that, punishing must take effect". The disciples of Jesus, however, had already noticed that their Master took the matter of forgiving one another much more seriously and extended it far beyond the limits fixed by the teachers in Israel. Peter, therefore, believed that he was mentioning a very high number when he asked whether it was enough to forgive offences up to the seventh time. Why, that was more than double the number mentioned by the learned doctors of the people in fixing the limits for the exercise of forgiveness. With such a number, Peter thought, Jesus would be more than satisfied. But that was by no means the case; for Jesus answered Peter, "I tell thee, not seven times, but seventy times seven". How many times is this? It is four

hundred and ninety times. What a large number! One would need a good memory to keep track of all offences given and received up to such a limit. It would indeed be necessary to keep a written account of them, if one desired to forgive offences only within the boundaries of this number. But that was not what Jesus had in mind. By mentioning such a large number Jesus wanted to discourage all attempts at counting how many times one had forgiven his brother; He desired to say this: "We must not set any limitations in the matter of forgiving one another, but always be ready again to exercise forgiveness, without asking whether the limits of forgiveness have not been reached". He meant to say to Peter, "Thy good will is indeed laudable, but in a most important point thou art nevertheless mistaken. As long as one counts the number of times that he forgives his brother, he is not forgiving him in the right spirit, if at all. One might think, 'Now I have already forgiven my offender four, now I have forgiven him five, now six times; now, after I shall have forgiven him just once more, it will be often enough, and then I may punish him, thus getting satisfaction for all the wrong that he has done me'. If one forgives with a view to avenging himself later, he really does not forgive at all. No, forgiving and forgetting go together, so that in every new case of offence there may be new forgiveness".

In order to bring this important truth home to Peter and His other disciples, as well as to us, so that both they and we might see how one must, without limitation, forgive those who injure or offend him, Jesus related the following story:

Once there was a king who wanted to reckon with his servants; he was desirous of comparing his account-books with theirs, in order to find out how much they owed each other, or whether their accounts balanced. In ancient times it was no rare occurrence for kings to loan their trustworthy slaves large sums of money, that they might carry on a regu-

lar banking business with it. They were allowed to loan the money out on interest, to invest it in land, or to speculate in any other way, if only the original sum of money was thereby increased. A certain share of the profit belonged to them, the rest they had to deliver to the king. Both the king and his slaves kept account of these transactions, and from time to time they came together in order to compare and balance their books. On such occasions, the slave had to present his books to the king, pay him his share of the profits, or even return the capital, together with the interest thereon. The king of whom Jesus speaks in our story was a man rich beyond all measure. He had so much money that he could have bought up whole counties in our state and paid for them in cash. This exceptionally rich king, then, appointed such a day for taking account of the money that he had loaned his slaves, with the understanding that they were to carry on a banking business with it, or invest the same in some other profitable way.

So, on the appointed day, all the slaves of this king entered his office. Many a one looked as if he felt prefectly free and easy in the king's presence; his accounts were in good order, and he had invested his master's money to good advantage and made a handsome profit; he had the amount in his pocket and could give the king the share which belonged to him by mutual agreement. But there were also those among the slaves who entered the king's office rather hesitatingly, as if they did not have a clear conscience, or for some other reason were in a state of depression. Perhaps they had gained very little with the money loaned them, and could, therefore, give the king but a meagre sum for his share of the profits; or, it may be that some of them had been unfortunate in their speculations and lost all their earlier gains, so that they would have to take of their own money in order to make up even the amount that the king had loaned them,

not to speak of any profits which they were expected to divide with him.

Standing well to the rear in the waiting room, there was a man with an exceptionally pale face, and with lips tightly pressed together. He looked as if he had not slept much the night before, and as if even now his thoughts were troubling him. He had been the last one to enter the room, and his downcast eyes showed that he was not looking forward to anything pleasant. This was indeed to be a sad day for him. Not only had he not gained anything, but he had lost everything, as the reckoning with the king would show. He was expected to hand over to the king thousands, yes, millions of dollars, and, behold, there was not a cent in his treasury. He had a few dollars coming to him which he had loaned to several of his poorer fellow-slaves, but he could not take time to collect these small amounts, and, besides, in comparison to his indebtedness to the king, they were like a drop of water on a hot stove. When his name was called, he shuddered somewhat, and with a heavy, dragging step walked up to the king. The king's accountant turned to those pages of the book upon which the name of this particular slave was entered. The left hand page contained a record of what the king had loaned him; on the right hand page were noted the amounts which the slave had paid over to his master. The king motioned to the accountant, who then read aloud the items entered on the left hand page. First item, a horse sold for the king, $150.00; second, the whole wheat crop sold for the king, $5000.00; third, rent collected for the king from twenty tenants, $50,000.00; and thus it went on. Each item that followed was larger than the one that had preceded it. Nor had a single item been omitted. The list seemed almost endless, yet as each item was read off, the slave had to say to himself, "Yes, that ist right, I got that too". The accountant finally drew a heavy line under the different amounts recorded in a long vertical column, added them and

said to the king, "Total, 10,000 pounds". In our money that was a little over 10 million dollars. What an immense sum! All this the slave had received from his master, the king, in order to do business with it and give his master a share of the profits. If an attempt had been made to pay this great amount of money in silver dollars, it would have taken a whole year to count them. Then the king examined the opposite page upon which all the payments that the slave had made on the heavy loan were supposed to be recorded. However, the page was empty, not a single dollar of the money having been returned. The king, therefore, asked the slave, "What papers of value hast thou brought with thee to balance thy account, so that I may at least get back the actual amount which I loaned thee?" The slave could not dodge the question, but had to confess, "My lord and king, I have brought nothing of value with me; the truth is, I am unable to pay my indebtedness; I have lived on rather a grand scale and made somewhat rash speculations, so that there is nothing left of all the money which thou gavest me; the capital, together with the interest, is gone". Then the king grew very angry. Calling several of his trustworthy servants, he said to them, "Here, take this shiftless man, sell him, his wife and his children, his furniture, his clothes and everything else that he may possess! Sell it, and bring me the money that you realize in this way. Thus shall I regain at least a small fraction of the amount that I loaned him, and he will be punished for life". You know, they used to sell human beings like so many cattle, so that whole families were scattered and broken up by that unholy traffic.

When the unfortunate man heard this verdict, the pallor in his face became even more pronounced, his body trembled, and he gave vent to a long, deep groan. But a moment later he threw himself at his master's feet and pleaded with him in his own behalf, pouring forth a torrent of words and saying, in substance, "Have patience with me, and I will pay

thee all. I am willing to work from early in the morning till late at night, and assure thee that I shall do nothing but save until my whole indebtedness is paid. Only do not deprive me and my family of our home and freedom; do not separate us from one another, nor banish me forever from thy presence". When the king thus saw the man lying before him and writhing in his extreme fear, he took pity on him, and his eyes, but a moment ago all ablaze with wrath, now reflected the soft light of his mildness and unlimited grace. He laid his hand upon the shoulder of the frightened man, who was on the verge of despair, and said to him, "What thou hast said about paying thy indebtedness, is utter folly; for thou wilt never be able to pay it. The debt is too great and thy resources are too limited. It would be quite impossible for thee to pay as much as the interest on that vast amount. But I will let mercy take the place of right: thou shalt not be sold, thou shalt be permitted to remain at home with thy wife and children, and as for thy indebtedness, I will make thee a present of it. It shall be cancelled and utterly wiped out. Accountant, cancel the whole page and mark it paid". The accountant or bookkeeper did as he was told. The slave, still lying at his master's feet, did not know at first what to think. His whole immense debt was to be wiped out at a single stroke! Oh, that was unheard of, boundless, truly royal grace! Who would have thought such a thing possible?! Was the king really in earnest about the matter? A look into the king's eyes was sufficient to convince the slave that his master meant every word that he had said. His eyes reflected naught but boundless grace and mercy. So he thanked his master most heartily and passed out of the accounting-room, passed out as a free man, whose whole indebtedness had been cancelled. He could of a truth exclaim, "To me, a sinner, grace is given, and wonderful compassion shown".

Yes, this is what he could have said. But did he really say it, and prove himself thankful for his master's unlimited

grace in deed, as well as in word? I think that in passing out of his master's office he should have made the vow: "Just as the king granted me release from my vast indebtedness, so will I gladly grant release to others who may be indebted to me for small sums of money that I loaned them, but which they are unable to pay back. Just as I have been forgiven, so will I forgive anyone who may have wronged me. Thus will I prove myself grateful in deed and in truth". To make such a vow and then to act upon it, would have been meet and right.

But now let us hear how Jesus continued in His story, thus arriving at the point that he wanted to stress. The slave passed out of his master's room. But, strange to say, as soon as he was outside, not a trace was to be seen of the humility with which he had thrown himself at the knees of the king. Proudly, with his head tilted toward the back, he walked through the halls of the royal palace. That augured nothing good. One who so quickly forgets his fear and despair, will not be apt to have a good memory for the grace to which he owes his deliverance from so sore a plight. Being proud and haughty makes the heart cold and unrelenting. It was so in the present instance. When the servant arrived in the yard outside, he met one of his fellow-servants. At once he recognized him as being among those who were indebted to him for a mere trifle. This particular servant owed him only 100 pence, that is, not quite $17.00. What should he have done in this case? Would we not have expected him to say to his fellow-servant, "Thou owest me $17.00, and canst not very well manage to pay them back to me. Listen, I have just experienced the most wonderful grace on the part of our master, the king; he forgave me my debt, which was many, many times as great as the paltry sum which thou owest me; therefore, I will give myself the pleasure of freeing thee from thy debt; henceforth thou shalt owe me nothing". Yes, that is what he should have done. It would have been a tangible

sign of his gratitude, well-pleasing both to God and man. One should think that it would have been impossible for him to act differently. But hardly had he caught sight of his fellow-servant than he grabbed him by his coat collar with both hands, choked him and sternly uttered the demand, "Pay me what thou owest to me". His fellow-servant did the very thing that he had done. He fell down before him and exclaimed, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all". And in saying this, he had not exaggerated the matter; for, as a day laborer, it would have taken him only 100 days to earn those 100 pence. But the one who himself had just been made a present of such a vast indebtedness would not heed his earnest plea for a time of grace in which to realize the money needed to pay the small amount of his debt. He went and cast him into prison, determined to have him remain there until his indebtedness was paid. Was that not terrible? Had not that man deserved that all the grace shown him was taken back and that he himself was imprisoned forever?

That was at least what the other servants thought, who had witnessed his cruelty and hard-heartedness. They were quite unable to understand how one of their fellow-servants could act like that. Deeply grieved, they went to the king and told him all about what had happened. Then the king sent for the unrelenting servant and said to him, "Thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou besoughtest me; shouldst thou not also have shown mercy to thy fellow-servant, even as I showed mercy on thee?" And the king grew angry and cast him into the innermost prison, where his feet were made fast in the stocks, so that it was impossible for him to stir from his place. There he was to stay until he had paid all that he owed the king. That meant imprisonment for life, since he could not even begin to pay off that debt of ten million dollars. Such was the sad conclusion of the story which in its first half had ended so happily. Did Peter notice that this story was the answer of Jesus to

his question, "How many times must I forgive my brother?" To be sure, he knew and understood what it was to teach him. In all probability he said to himself, "The exceedingly rich king of whom Jesus spoke represents God, and the servants are His subjects, the citizens of His kingdom. These, figuratively speaking, owe God ten thousand pounds, for they daily commit many grievous sins and thereby deserve being condemned to eternal punishment. However, since God is boundlessly gracious to them and releases them from this immense debt of sin, they must, out of sheer gratitude, also forgive, and thus release from guilt, those who sin against them. Since God sets no limits for the exercise of His forgiveness, they likewise dare set none for the exercise of theirs. The guilt of their fellow-men must never appear so great to them as to make them say, 'Now the limits have been reached, and I shall no longer forgive my offender'. They should remember that the guilt of their fellow-men over against them is a mere trifle when compared with their own guilt over against God. If they limit their forgiveness, saying, 'Seven times and no oftener', or if they entirely refuse to forgive those who sin against them, God revokes the forgiveness which He has already granted them, so that they again become lost and condemned creatures, doomed to suffer eternal punishment in hell. Just this last point is mentioned by the Lord with special emphasis, because He closed His story with the threatening words, 'So shall also My heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts'".

Peter understood all this very clearly and remembered it for all future time. I only hope that you, children, will also remember it and act accordingly. You see, God the heavenly King also has a book in which He keeps a record of all the evil that you commit. When you have been slothful instead of diligent, when you have disobeyed your father and mother, when you have told a lie, when you have been envious and jealous of one another, when you have not learned your

Bible verses and Bible stories for the Sunday school, when you have had thoughts in your hearts which would have made you blush if they had become exposed, when you have gone to bed without saying your prayers, or when you have recited them in a mechanical way, you have been furnishing God just so many items for His account-book. He has made a record of all your sins, not one of them has been left unrecorded. Now, because of all these sins you have merited God's wrath, and were He to deal with you according to what you have deserved, He would have to condemn you to eternal punishment in hell. But you have heard of what happened on Good Friday and Easter. In His incomprehensible grace and mercy He has said to us, "For the sake of Jesus Christ all your sins are forgiven; you shall be free from all guilt and from all resultant punishment". Tell me, children, how can we thank Him for this more acceptably than by daily and cordially forgiving those who sin against us? Shall we, then, say to one who offends us, "I will forgive you once, twice, three, or even seven times, but no oftener?" Shall we dare to say to anyone, "I am mad at you and shall not forgive you any more, because you have gone beyond the limits?" No, you will not dare talk like that. You will ever be ready to forgive, no matter how many times you may have been offended. For God Himself has forgiven you ever and ever so many more times than you have forgiven those who have injured or offended you. And remember this: if you do not practice forgiveness, you can not pray the fifth petition any more with a clear conscience; for after you had prayed, "Forgive us our trespasses", God could intervene and say, "Hold on, or you will be telling a lie, since you do not forgive those who trespass against you". And in this event you will not only not receive any forgiveness, but you will also lose the forgiveness that God has already granted you, as is shown by what happened to the wicked servant in our story. To be without God's forgiveness is, however, the worst thing that can hap-

pen to us. So out of gratitude toward God who daily and abundantly forgives us all our sins, let us henceforth also most heartily forgive and readily do good to those who may injure or offend us. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Remember this and let your daily conduct be in conformity with it.

23. How It Is the Will of Jesus That We Should Pray.

The present Sunday is called Rogate. This is a Latin word and means, "Pray!" Hence we are today observing the Sunday of Prayer. If you will look into your hymnal, you will find that there are quite a few Sundays in the Church Year which have Latin names. Thus the Sundays before Easter are designated as follows: Invocavit, Reminiscere, Oculi, Laetare, Judica, and Palmarum. The Sundays intervening between Easter and Pentecost also have Latin names throughout, being known, respectively, as Quasimodogeniti, Misericordias Domini, Jubilate, Cantate, Rogate, and Exaudi. By looking through your Lesson Helps, you will be able to find some more Latin names of certain Sundays of the Church Year. How did these Latin names come to be applied to them? In order to make this intelligible to us, we must bear in mind that these names date back to the time before Luther, when the whole altar service was conducted in the Latin language. The name of the Sunday was then derived from the first word of the verse which the choir sang when the priest entered the enclosure in which the altar stood.* Thus the

* The Latin word for Entrance is Introitus; that is why these verses are still called Introits. English translations of them are to be found in the Church Book. The name Introits has been retained, although these verses are at present usually sung or spoken some time after the entrance of the pastor into the space surrounding the altar.

Introit, or verse of entrance, for the Sunday before Palmarum begins with the word "Judica" (= Judge), which thus came to be used as the name of the Sunday in question. Again, the Introit for the fourth Sunday after Easter starts out with the word "Cantate" (= Sing), which Sunday was therefore called Cantate. The present Sunday is named Rogate for the reason that the first word in its Introit is Rogate (= Pray). This name befits the present Sunday doubly well because the Gospel lesson for Rogate treats of prayer, to be more exact, of prayer in the name of Jesus. This being the Sunday of prayer in a special sense, I propose to talk to you on this very subject, and show you **how it is the will of Jesus that we should pray.**

To pray, should be with us a matter of course. No special admonition to pray ought to be necessary in our case. If we did not pray, we could learn a lesson in this respect from the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Or, do not the beasts roar for food, and do not the birds twitter when they have found fresh water to drink? It is their way of asking God for food and offering thanks to Him because He so graciously supplies them with meat and drink. The Bible itself presents it that way; for it says of God, "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry (Psalm 147. 9). That we are to pray, we could also learn from the heathen. For, although they do not call upon the living God, but upon the dumb idols which they have made for themselves, they do pray. Some of them ask the sun to turn its face toward them in kindness and supply them with all that they need for this life, while others turn to the moon for the same purpose. Many heathen people have their morning and evening prayer; they seldom enter a battle without having called upon their gods for victory; the public meetings in which they take counsel with one another concerning the weal and woe of their country are opened with religious ceremonies of which prayer forms a prominent part. The Ameri-

can Indians called upon the Great Spirit to bless them in their work and ventures. We still have prayers of ancient heathen people, prayers that were offered by them 3000 years ago. Those heathen people had found out that their own strength was not sufficient to shield them against the forces of evil, so they asked their gods to help them. Sometimes they were deeply in earnest with their prayers, and even went so far as to offer their own children to the gods, hoping thus to win their favor and induce them to answer their prayers. That showed great spiritual blindness and was a horrible sin, yet they must have thought highly of the help of their gods and of prayer as a means of obtaining such help, or they would not have offered prayer and made such sacrifices to their imaginary deities. Should not their example cause the blush of shame to rise to our cheeks? The Jews also prayed most diligently. The Book of Psalms, which is contained in the Old Testament, was their prayer book, and Dr. Luther found it so beautiful that he declared he knew of no better one. In the days of our Savior their prayers were indeed often very mechanical, and some of them seemed to think that if they only made real long prayers and repeated them over and over again, it would be pleasing to God and prompt Him to hear them. But while their prayers were thus very deficient, they would have resented it most strenuously if anyone had told them not to pray.

But if all these people pray, or at least know that prayer should be practiced, shall we be the only ones who do not pray, we who call ourselves Christians? That would be exceedingly strange. We should, on the contrary, pray much better and much more diligently than others. As Christians, we know God much better than the Jews and much better than the heathen. Not only do we know that He created us and that He alone preserves us and keeps us in good health, but we also know that He redeemed us by the bitter sufferings and death of His dear Son from all sin, from death and from

the power of the devil. We know that in baptism He, through Jesus Christ, made us His children. Should not children speak with their Father? You speak with your earthly father and mother. When anything hurts you, you run to your mother and tell her about it; when you need anything, you go to your father and ask him for it; when you have received anything from your parents, you thank them for it. When you have been disobedient to them and caused them to feel bad, you, provided you are good children, will afterwards go to them and say, "Father, mother, please forgive me, I shall not do it again". And only to your heavenly Father you do not want to open your mouth, Him you want to let walk beside you day after day (for He is ever with you) and not even say a word to Him, be it a word of prayer or one of thanksgiving? Children, if that is the way you behave, then you are not God's children at all, and He has ceased to be your Father. With true children of God it is a matter of course that they speak with Him, and what else is prayer if it is not speaking with God? You must regard it as a joy, as something for which you have reason to be grateful, that you are allowed to speak with Him. Would you not be thankful if a man mightier, richer, wiser and friendlier than all others should say to you, "You may come to me at any time. I will always lend you my ear and in every instance do for you what is to your best interest"? Very well, God is mightier and richer, wiser and friendlier than any human mind can conceive, and He says to you, "Call upon Me in every time of need, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me. I am nigh unto all them that call upon Me, to all that call upon Me in truth. Hope in Me at all times, dear people, pour out your hearts before Me". Should this not make you feel glad, should it not prompt you to come to Him with all cheerfulness and confidence and tell Him of all your joys and of all your sorrows?

Surely, God's children just must pray, they simply can not help it. That is why Jesus, our beloved Savior, once said to His disciples, and now says so to us, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you". He also tells you how to pray; for He says, "When ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy inner chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will recompense thee". To have an inner chamber, a little private room where you can be alone with God, is indeed desirable; but it is of far greater importance for you to close the doors and windows which lead to the soul than to close those leading to any room of your house. Your eyes and ears are the windows that lead to the inner chamber of the soul, and these windows you should keep closed when you pray, so that your thoughts may be entirely directed toward God. And when you thus have your thoughts well collected, when you are real devout and think of nothing save God, then it will not matter how long you pray. The worth of a prayer does not depend upon its length, but upon its being uttered fervently; you must put your whole heart into every word, and pray with earnestness; for Jesus says, "In praying, use not vain repititions, as the Gentiles do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking". Let your prayer be short but devout, never forgetting who He is before whom you stand, never losing sight of the fact that you are addressing the great and holy God, never allowing your thoughts to wander, but keeping them collected, so that you may be aware of what you are praying, and that your prayers may be something more than mere words.

Our prayers, then, should be devout; but we should also, as Jesus tells us, pray with all confidence. We should trust

God always to give us of the very best, to hear our prayers in such a way that it will be to our eternal good. What earthly father whose son asks him for a piece of bread will give him a stone? And again, if his son asks him for a fish, will he hand him a serpent? That would indeed be unthinkable. No father fares thus with his child. He gives it only such things as are good and wholesome for it. How much more, then, shall our Father in heaven give good things to them that ask Him! We must trust Him for that, and continue to trust Him for it even when that which He gives us does not seem to us as being to our best interest. Here, for example, there is one who, being sick, asks God to make him well; God, however, permits the sickness to grow worse, or even suffers him to die. That does not look like anything good and wholesome, but like something that is bad and injurious, like a stone instead of bread. But in spite of all this we must continue to believe that in the end it will nevertheless be for our good. Though we may not be able to understand it now, we shall learn to realize it later, and thank God instead of finding fault with Him.

So we are to pray devoutly and with all confidence, firmly trusting that our heavenly Father will, in response to our prayers, give us what in the end is for our spiritual and eternal benefit. To these two points Jesus adds a third. He tells us to pray with perseverance, that is, not to quit praying when God seems neither to know nor to hear us. The injunction to continue steadfast in prayer is contained in these words of the Master: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you". Here we are told to ask, to seek, to knock. When we come to Him and ask Him for something in soft tones, without immediately finding Him and His gift, then we are to seek both Him and His gift most earnestly, just as we seek one who is to help us and search the whole house for him; and as we, having found the room in which the one whom we

seek is present, knock at the door until there is a response and the door is opened, so we in prayer should knock at God's door again and again, until He opens it, and gives us the things that are good and wholesome for us. To illustrate this point, namely, perseverance in prayer, Jesus Himself tells us a very fitting story. Once a man came to the house of a friend at midnight and said to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine, who is on a journey, has come to me. He is all tired out, and needs to refresh himself before going to bed. But my larder is empty and I have nothing to set before him. So please to give me three loaves of bread, and I shall do that much for you some time". The man inside answered and said, "Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I can not rise and give you that for which you ask". His friend, however, did not go away peeved and disappointed, but knocked a second and a third time, in fact, he kept right on knocking, until the man inside simply could not stand it any longer and said to himself, "He is so persistent that it will do me no good to refuse him, so I shall rise and give him as many loaves as he needs". Perseverance helped his friend to gain his point. In like manner, we must knock at God's door continuously, and not stop until He comes unto us and gives us what we ask of Him. He will grant our prayer, not in order to get rid of us, but because He likes to reward those who thus show their faith in Him, as their Father.

There, now we know how we are to pray; Jesus has told us. We are to pray devoutly, with confidence, and with perseverance. But in order that we might be able to ask for the right kind of gifts, Jesus also gives us a model prayer, one that is familiar to us all. We call it the Lord's prayer, because He gave it to us. It happened like this: Once His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples". Jesus then replied, "When ye pray,

ye shall say: 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen'". This is indeed the great model prayer by which Jesus has taught us to pray acceptably. It begins with the words: "Our Father, who art in heaven". Thus we are to address God. But if this is the way we may speak to Him, then we have every reason to believe that He is truly our Father, and that we are His children indeed. What a glorious beginning! For if we may firmly believe that God is truly our Father and that we are His children indeed, then we have no reason for being afraid of Him, but may approach Him with all cheerfulness and confidence, in no wise doubting, but firmly believing that to us, as His children, He will give only such things as are for our good. This really makes one feel like praying.

Having addressed God as our Father, which are the first things that we should pray for? If we are true children of God, then we will regard the affairs of our heavenly Father as the chief thing, and give them the preference. We will say to Him, first and foremost, "**Thy** name be hallowed, **Thy** kingdom come, **Thy** will be done on earth as it is in heaven". These are the great affairs of our heavenly Father's kingdom. His name is to be hallowed; by teaching His word in all its truth and purity and leading holy lives in accordance with it, we are to do our share in making His name great and revered throughout the earth. His kingdom is to come, so that there may be a continuous increase in the number of those who recognize Him as their King and accept Him by faith. His will is to be done, so that no other, but only His own good and gracious will may prevail, the will which ever aims to effect our salvation.

After we have thus presented to God in prayer His own great affairs, we may also present to Him our own affairs, our own needs and perils, saying: "Give us this day **our** daily bread, and forgive us **our** trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead **us** not into temptation, but deliver **us** from evil". What pertains to the needs of the body we may mention first, not as if our daily bread and all that belongs to it were the chief thing, but in order that we may then pay so much more undisturbed attention to the needs of the soul, and spread them out before our heavenly Father. Only **one,** the fourth petition, pertains to our bodily needs, while **three** treat of the things that we need for the soul, namely, the fifth, sixth and seventh. For the body we need the daily bread, and for this we may pray to God; the foremost need of the soul is forgiveness in view of the trespasses committed by us in the past. For our souls we also need preservation from new sin; that is why we add, "And lead us not into temptation", which means this, "See to it that we are not led into a situation which would involve our being tempted by the devil, the world and our own flesh, and if it does happen that we must contend with these powers, help us in the end to overcome and gain the victory". Since, however, the world is full of evil things, we finally pray, "But deliver us from evil, heavenly Father, and when the hour of death arrives grant us a blessed end and graciously take us into Thy eternal kingdom, where sin and temptation cease to exist".

This is of a truth a glorious model prayer. It contains everything that we, as God's children, need and may ask of our heavenly Father. We also find in it ample instruction as to how we should pray, in order to obtain all the great gifts and benefits which it mentions. But in this respect we have already heard that we must pray this great model prayer in spirit and in truth, not mechanically, but devoutly, not timidly and in a spirit of doubt, but with all the cheerfulness

and confidence that children show in making a request of their father, and with that perseverance which prompts one to continue instant in prayer even when he does not immediately notice any results. The Lord's Prayer is a key by means of which we gain access to all the great and rich store-houses of our heavenly Father. Shall we not, therefore, use it with diligence and regularity, so that we may enter into those divine store-houses and receive of their unlimited treasure at all times, in the morning and in the evening, as well as in any fear or peril that may overcome us in the course of the day? When you are distressed by the observation that so many evil forces are trying to hinder the great kingdom of God from extending its boundaries here on earth, or from becoming more firmly established in the hearts of men, let this be your prayer: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". When you lack any of the things that belong to the wants and support of the body, voice the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread". When the burden of old sins rests heavily upon your consciences, and you desire to be kept from committing new sins, give vent to the earnest plea, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". And as often as you pray trust your heavenly Father implicitly, and in no wise doubt, that in response to your prayer He will always give you what is to your best interest. If you do this, then you will have learned to pray in accordance with the will of your Savior Jesus Christ.

24. How Jesus Ascended Into Heaven in Order That He Might Be With Us Always.

Last Thursday we celebrated Ascension Day. We were thus put in mind of the great truth that Jesus ascended into heaven, thereby benefitting us, as well as gaining honor and

glory for Himself. After He had risen on Easter morning, He for a period of forty days appeared among His disciples repeatedly. As we but recently heard, He appeared to Mary Magdalene on Easter morning and right afterwards was seen also by several other devout women when they were coming from the grave and returning to the city in great haste. In the afternoon of Easter Day He joined the two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus, and in the evening of the same day He revealed Himself to the disciples in Jerusalem. A week later He came to them again, when Thomas was with them, and said to this disciple, "Reach hither thy finger, and see My hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing". During the four weeks that followed Easter Day He showed Himself to His disciples many more times, now here, now there, either up in Galilee where He had been with them so much before His sufferings began, or down in Judaea, where the city of Jerusalem was located, the city in and near which had occurred His sufferings, death and resurrection. Oh, those were happy and blessed moments when Jesus visibly entered into the midst of His disciples and conversed with them! In this way He not only made them absolutely sure of His having risen from the dead and returned to life, but they also repeatedly saw evidences of His divine power; for how could a mere man have gone through locked doors, suddenly appearing and again disappearing? Above all things, the disciples were made happy, and their eyes fairly shown, and their hearts were all aglow, when Jesus opened His lips and discoursed to them on the most important subjects. Thus everything was made clear to them, why Jesus came into the world, and why it was necessary for Him to suffer death upon the cross. They learned to understand with increasing clearness how it was that by His very sufferings and death He had become their Savior, and redeemed, purchased and won all men from sin, from death and from the

power of the devil, and that now all those who from their hearts believe in Him as their King are to make up His kingdom. However, when these forty days were past, Jesus left His disciples, in order not to return to them in such a way that they could see Him; He ascended into heaven. About this I must tell you today; let us hear **how Jesus ascended into heaven in order that He might be with us always.**

First we shall hear how Jesus prepared His disciples for His ascension. Once, presumably toward the end of those forty days, Jesus appeared to His disciples on a mountain in Galilee. And when they saw Him, they fell down before Him, as Thomas did there in Jerusalem; for they knew beyond a doubt that Jesus is true God, and when God makes His appearance, it is proper that man should prostrate himself before Him. Nor did Jesus object to having such honors accorded Him by His disciples, for He was conscious of being true God, the Lord of lords and King of kings. Yes, as if to tell them that it was right for them thus to prostrate themselves before Him, as before a heavenly King, He said to them, "I am a King; unto Me is given all power in heaven and on earth. An earthly king only has power over one land and people; I have power over all lands and people in the world; upon the entire earth there is not a single place over which I do not have power, and no one among the sons of men is stronger than I. But I am not only King upon the earth, to My kingdom the heaven above also belongs. There, too, all power is given unto Me. I am the Father's Equal in power and glory; before Me the angels must bow down, and they are ever at My service, ready to execute My commands; and if anyone on earth desires to come to the Father in heaven, he can only do it through Me. I am Lord both of the visible and of the invisible world; all things are in My hands". The disciples had never before heard their Master talk in this strain. He declared Himself King in an altogether singular sense of the word. How they must have

pricked up their ears and listened to Him! That was indeed more than had entered their remotest dreams: their Master, with Whom they had eaten and drunk here on earth; their Master, Whom they had seen after His resurrection from the dead, and whom they had touched with their hands; their Master Lord of heaven and earth!

And what were they to be? They were to be His messengers, and as such go into all the world with a most important message. For the Lord went on to say to them, "Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you". As a king has soldiers, so were the disciples to be the soldiers of the great King Jesus Christ and conquer the world for Him. Their weapons, however, were not to consist of swords and staves, guns and cannons; they were to gain their victories solely by the use of spiritual weapons, such as the word, the sermon, the Gospel, the glad tidings of the Savior Jesus Christ, baptism in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. They are told to preach and to baptize, and thereby to make all nations the disciples of Jesus. It is not for them to win the nations outwardly by laying waste their cities and taking away their lands, like in the present world war, but to win the hearts of the people, causing them to trust in Jesus alone and to follow His example in their daily life, as His true disciples. Children, this is the great mission decree which Jesus gave to His disciples. That is why we even today send missionaries to the heathen; they, too, are to become disciples of Jesus and worship Him as the true King in heaven and on earth.

But if the disciples were not to have any weapons except the word and baptism, in winning the nations of the earth for Christ, they might have felt timid and afraid; for, children, it is not an easy matter to wage spiritual warfare against the

whole world. However, let me tell you what Jesus added to His mission decree. He brought it to a close by saying to His disciples, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world". This saying was of such a nature that it could help them overcome all fear and timidity. They had no cause for being afraid to confront the world in spiritual combat, since there was One with them mightier than the whole world. When they preached, He would make His appeal to the hearts of the people, and when they baptized, it was really Jesus that baptized through them. No wonder, then, that he is saved who "believeth and is baptized".

Surely, it was a supreme moment when Jesus thus appeared to His disciples and addressed to them these weighty words: "Unto Me is given all power in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, into all the world, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world". By these words Jesus did not only give His disciples the great mission command, charging them to make all nations His disciples; but they were also a means of preparing the disciples for His ascension into heaven. For what disadvantage would it be for them if their Master left them and ascended into heaven, as long as He was going to be with them nevertheless, though unseen, with them alway, even unto the end of the world? Under these circumstances they could be happy here on earth in spite of the fact that Jesus had ascended into heaven.

Now, just how did Jesus effect His ascension? He had told His disciples to gather in Jerusalem; for where He had suffered and died, there He also wanted to ascend into heaven and enter into the glory which He had with the Father before the world existed. And when they had come together in Jerusalem, Jesus led them out of the city, across the brook

Kidron, and up the Mount of Olives, the very way which they had gone in the evening of Holy Thursday, when Jesus had in view His sufferings in the garden of Gethsemane. While on the way, He again talked to them about the kingdom which He would establish on earth through them in the hearts of men. When they had reached the top of the Mount of Olives, He stood still, and His disciples most likely surrounded Him, so as to catch every word that He might say. Then He told them, "Stay here in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes down upon you. For John baptized with water, but I will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, who will descend upon you before many days shall have passed by. And when the Spirit of God shall have come upon you, go and carry out My mission command; for you are to preach of My kingdom in all the world. I Myself have spoken to you, and have let you see Me time and again during these forty days, in order that you might be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the end of the world; for I desire that all men should know that I am the true Savior and the real heavenly King, to whom their hearts must belong". And when He had said this, He raised His hands and blessed His disciples. And while He still had His hands spread out over them, He rose upward before their very eyes, soaring higher and higher into the deep blue sky above. In sheer astonishment the disciples followed Him with their eyes. Then a cloud came and received Him. It was as if He had disappeared behind a curtain, and the disciples could not see Him any more. Such was Christ's ascension. This time He went away from them in an altogether different way than before, in order that they might realize that something extraordinary was happening. He disappeared in an upward direction, toward heaven, so that they might know it was the last time they saw Him here on earth; they were to realize that He would not come to them as heretofore, in a visible manner, until they had complied with His command to go into all

the world and make all nations His disciples by preaching the Gospel to them and administering baptism in His name. From now on they were to think of Him as being with the Father, and no longer expect Him to come to them visibly, as He had during the forty days that followed His resurrection.

For a long while they kept their eyes directed heavenward, even after they could not see Jesus any more, just as one keeps right on looking in the direction of a ship that is carrying away some dear friend, even after the ship has vanished out of sight and nothing is to be seen but the blue sea and perhaps a light cloud of smoke hovering over the water. But while they were thus standing there and looking upward in the direction of the cloud back of which Jesus had disappeared, behold, two men in white garments, that is, two angels, stood beside them, saying, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall come again in the same way as ye have seen Him going into heaven". Then they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. What, with great joy? Yes, with great joy; for although their Lord and Master had gone from them and they could see Him no more, they knew that He had returned to the Father, so that from heaven He would be with them everywhere and at all times.

Of a truth, children, the Savior did not ascend to heaven in order to be far removed from us, but, on the contrary, in order that He might be with us every day and hour, with us, too, everywhere. Had He remained on earth, He could have been with us only in one place at a time, not in all places at the same time. But since He ascended into heaven He can be, and actually is, everywhere, just as the blue dome of heaven is above us everywhere, no matter in what place on earth we may happen to dwell. Because He ascended into heaven, He can hear us all when we pray to Him. Now, if a girl in China, a boy in India, a negro in the interior of Africa,

a Sunday school pupil in America, your brother in France and you here in Dubuque pray to Jesus at the same time, He can hear and understand you all, and does not need to say to you, "Just wait a moment, while I listen to this little Chinese girl". And as He can hear us all, so we may all at any time come to Him with our petitions. A little boy once saw a sign on the door of a doctor's house; upon it were written these words: "Hours for Consultation 1—3 o'clock". He said to his aunt who was with him, "Say, auntie, on the wall of her room grandma has a card with the Bible verse, 'I am the Lord, thy Physician'. Does she know at what hours the Lord Jesus may be consulted?" What do you suppose the aunt replied? Surely, at all hours, by day and by night, one may go to the Lord Jesus and have a consultation with Him. And as often as one goes to Him, He is able to lend advice and help. For unto Him is given all power in heaven and on earth. No president, no king and no kaiser is His equal in power. He is Lord over the earth and the sea, over the clouds and the winds, over men and animals, over health and sickness, over life and death. At His command the thunder rolls, the lightning flashes, the rivers rise, the waves roar, and death comes to claim his victims among the sons of men. At His beck the warm sun shines, the cold snow melts, the bleak meadows grow green, the bare trees are covered with foliage and bring forth juicy fruit, and the sick little sister is restored to health. He can also make the evil thoughts leave our hearts; for unto Him is given all power, and He uses it to give us, His children, what is good and wholesome for us. The ascension of Jesus can, therefore, also gladden our hearts; for it tells us, "Your Savior is both able and willing to be with you always and everywhere. That is what makes our lives happy and blessed here on earth. And how much happier it will make us in heaven to see Him face to face, and to be with Him forever! That will be bliss beyond all that we can now understand or imagine. And Jesus said that

He would draw us all unto Himself, that we might be where He is. So let us fold our hands and pray:

Draw us to Thee,
That we may be
At home with Thee in heaven;
There laud and praise
Through endless days
To Thee, O Lord, be given!

25. How Jesus Sent the Holy Spirit, Whose Activity Consists in Leading Us to Jesus.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He had repeatedly given His disciples the promise that He would send them the Holy Spirit. The burden of this promise was: "I will not leave you orphans. You shall not be like orphan children whose father and mother have died and who are left alone in the world. No, having ascended into heaven, and being without the limitations of space, I shall be with you alway, although not in such a way that you will be able to see me, and I will let My Holy Spirit descend upon you. He will enter your hearts, and, dwelling within you, He will speak to you, teach you, encourage you, and comfort you, just as I did as long as I was with you in a visible manner. Meanwhile, remain in Jerusalem, and rest assured, I shall soon redeem My promise and endow you with the Holy Spirit from on high". This promise gladdened the hearts of the disciples, and why should it not have made them feel glad? What greater boon could be in store for them than to have their Lord and Master with them constantly, though in an invisible manner, and to receive into their hearts His Holy Spirit? If this boon became a reality, they surely would not be like orphans after the ascension of Jesus. They would not be left alone in the world, and would not have to be afraid

of anyone. So after the Lord's ascension into heaven, they were constantly together in Jerusalem and waited for the fulfillment of the Lord's promise, for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Nor did they wait in vain. We shall hear today **how Jesus fulfilled His promise and sent His disciples the Holy Spirit.**

Seven weeks had elapsed since the Jews had celebrated Easter and Jesus had risen from the dead, when the Jews celebrated another festival. It was the festival of harvest, upon which they thanked God for the good things they had harvested from their fields. In order to give the people a sort of object lesson on the subject of God's bounty, and enable them to understand more fully the purpose for which the festival was being observed, they took two large loaves of bread, which had been made of the flour gained from the newly harvested wheat, and brought them into the temple. In consideration of the fact that this festival was celebrated fifty days after Easter, and that the Greek word for the fiftieth day is pentecoste, this term also came to be applied to the Jewish harvest festival. It was the Pentecost of the Jews. As so much depends upon the harvest, and people would have to starve if God did not permit them to harvest anything, the Jews used to turn out in large numbers when their harvest festival was celebrated. The festival of Pentecost brought them to Jerusalem by the thousands. They came from Rome, from Egypt, from Asia Minor, from all the strange countries in which they happened to live at the time. It was a sort of home-coming, only on a very large scale. Our own little home-comings could not begin to compare with it.

Where so many people come together to celebrate a great festival, there is usually a great deal of noise. We often speak of crowds as being noisy. But where the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost all was quiet and restful. Ever since the Lord's ascension,

that is, for ten days, they had been together every day, waiting for the Lord to fulfill His promise and send them His Holy Spirit. They read from the Old Testament all those passages in which the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was promised. In the book of the prophet Joel they found the passage, "I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh". Among the prophecies of Ezekiel they discovered this one: "I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them". Turning to the book of Jeremiah, they read, "I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people". Isaiah, finally, gave them food for thought with his prophecy, "I will pour water upon the thirsty land, and streams upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine off-spring; and they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the water courses". And the more the disciples read of such passages from the Old Testament, and the more they thought of Christ's own promise, the more their hearts longed for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, the more they thirsted for this blessing from on high, even as the parched land in summer thirsts, as it were, for the refreshing rain, and the more fervently they prayed, "O our Lord and Master, send us Thy Holy Spirit. O Holy Spirit, enter in; among these hearts Thy work begin, Thy temple deign to make us".

And suddenly, children, something very great and wonderful happened. It was on the day of Pentecost, around 9 o'clock in the morning. We do not know just where the disciples were gathered at the time, whether it was in one of the halls that adjoined the temple and in which the Jews assembled for prayer, or in one of the private houses at Jerusalem. Nor is this of such great importance. But what happened then and there, is indeed worthy of our attention. While the disciples of Jesus, among them Peter, James and

John, Mary Magdalene, Salome and other devout women, were so fervently praying that the Holy Spirit might descend upon them, their prayer was answered in the most wonderful manner. For suddenly they heard a sound which resembled that of a mighty, rushing wind. It did not come from the Mediterranean Sea in the West, nor from the desert in the East, but down from heaven, from the direction in which Jesus had departed from the disciples, and it came directly to the house or building in which the disciples were assembled. Here the sound "as of a rushing mighty wind" filled the whole house, just as if the wind had opened doors and windows to make room for the current of air that rushed down from above. We can imagine how the disciples jumped to their feet and looked about in sheer astonishment. But their astonishment was made even more intense when they also observed something like fire coming down from heaven, dividing into smaller flames, and alighting upon their heads. And no sooner had they taken notice of this, than they knew what it all meant; for Jesus had said, "John baptized you with water, but I will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire". And they were indeed all filled with the Holy Spirit, both the men and the women, all the disciples, without any exception. Jesus had fulfilled His promise, He had sent His Holy Spirit into their hearts and thus joined them to Himself; the Holy Spirit was the bond that connected them with their Lord and Master most closely and intimately. And He also began immediately to work in their hearts; for all at once they were all prompted, as if by necessity, to speak and to preach; they simply could not help lauding and praising God and extolling His mighty works. They realized most fully that they were not doing this by their own strength; for the impulse to speak came to them all of a sudden, and what they spoke they did not speak in the Hebrew language which they had learned from their youth up, but in altogether foreign tongues, with which they had not been at all familiar.

The chief thing, of course, was not the mighty rushing wind that filled the house in which they were assembled, nor the tongues of fire that hovered above their heads, nor yet their wonderful speaking in strange languages, but this was the main thing, that the Holy Spirit entered their hearts; all else was but an outward sign or symbol of what the disciples experienced inwardly. God caused these signs and symbols to be heard and seen in order that men might take notice of the fact that something extraordinary had taken place, and that an entirely new era had been ushered in. For one can not see the Holy Spirit, nor does He speak as do human beings; how, therefore, could the Jews have found out that He had come, and that the promises of the Old Testament had been fulfilled? Some outward signs or symbols were needed, which could be seen and heard, thus informing the Jews of the invisible and inaudible coming of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of Jesus' disciples. By those outward signs and symbols God at the same time wanted to make it plain to the Jews what the Holy Spirit does, or was sent to do. God purposed to say this: The Holy Spirit is like the wind. You know, the wind can not be seen. No one can name the place where it begins and where it stops. But one can notice the movements of air currents that are called wind, and hear the rustling of the leaves of the trees that is caused by these movements. In like manner, the Holy Spirit has never been seen by anyone. But when He enters the heart, He moves it most perceptibly; it is moved to fear, love and trust in God, to shun that which is evil and do that which is good. As the strong wind breaks the dry and decayed trees to splinters and causes them to topple over, so the Holy Spirit would overthrow and bring to naught in our hearts everything that is morally decayed or unclean. As the warm winds of spring cause the trees and gardens and fields to thrive, clothing them in a beautiful garment of green, even making them bring forth fragrant blossoms and luscious fruit, so the

Holy Spirit will work in our hearts that which is good and beautiful, if we only do not offer willful resistance; "He alone to God can win us, He must work all good within us". The Holy Spirit also is like the fire. When He gains entrance to our hearts, He kindles a fire in them, so that what was cold grows warm,—even the fire of love, so that if formerly we were utterly selfish, paying no attention either to God or to man, we now begin to love God as well as our fellow-men, and earnestly seek to be of use to them. And when the heart has thus by the Holy Spirit been filled with love to God as well as man, then one begins to speak in new tongues; instead of continuing to curse and swear, he begins to utter words of praise and thanksgiving, thus using speech that he never would have learned, had he not come under the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. It must also be said that the Holy Spirit does His full share in causing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached to the heathen in the most diverse languages. It is evident, therefore, that by means of those outward signs and symbols—the wind, the fire, and the diverse languages—God spoke most plainly of what the Holy Spirit is and does, so that men might know it.

The sound that came down from heaven had been so strong and powerful that all the people in Jerusalem heard it, and because they had also seen upon what building that current from above descended, hundreds of people left their houses and went over to the one in which the sound of a mighty, rushing wind continued to make itself heard. From all directions they came streaming to the place where the disciples of Jesus were assembled. And how they were amazed when they saw the fire flames above their heads and heard them preach about the wonderful deeds of God! After they had stood near and listened for a while, they marveled still more, for now the strange Jews who had come from Rome, Egypt, Asia Minor, and other lands, noticed that each one of them was hearing the disciples preach in his language.

Whether it was the Latin, the Greek, or the Syrian language that they spoke in their respective countries, each one heard the things which the disciples preached in his peculiar mother tongue. At this they not only marveled, but it also scared them, because they noticed that here something outside of the ordinary was occurring. And so they began to say to one another, "Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? Have they ever had a chance to learn another language besides their own Hebrew? How is it, then, that we suddenly hear them preach in our various mother tongues? What has happened to enable them thus to speak in our tongues the mighty works of God? What does all this mean?" Only a few frivolous people, such as find their way into most every larger gathering, mocked the disciples, saying, "They are filled with new wine". That not only revealed their frivolity, but also displayed their ignorance. Or does being filled with intoxicating sweet wine enable anyone to speak different languages? On the contrary, an intoxicated man can not even speak his own language plainly any more.

Then Peter got up and delivered a powerful sermon in the Jewish language, which they could all understand. And this is what he said: "Men of Judaea, be this known unto you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose. Remember, it is only 9 o'clock in the morning, when one may be expected to be in a sober state of mind. No, these are not intoxicated. Something altogether different has happened. What God foretold through the prophet Joel, saying, 'I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh', that has now come to pass. Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, Him you did take by the hand of lawless men, Him you did crucify and slay. But this same Jesus God raised up from the dead. Of this we, His disciples, can bear witness. Being therefore exalted by the right hand of God, He has poured forth His

Spirit, as you have been made to hear and see in these signs and wonders. Let all the house of Israel therefore know most assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ". When they heard Peter speak these words, they were pricked in their hearts. Every word that he spoke was like the blow of a sledge-hammer. It struck home with tremendous force. It pierced their hearts like a sword. It made them squirm, they bowed their heads in shame. Like the echo out of the forest, came out of their hearts the response to Peter's words, and they had to confess, "Yes, we are verily guilty. We crucified this Jesus of Nazareth, we slew Him. And He had done us nothing but what was for our own good. Oh, how great is our guilt! Tell us, brethren, what shall we do, that this unspeakable sin may be forgiven us, and that, like you, we may receive the Holy Spirit?" Peter answered, "Repent, that is, change your mind; no longer regard Jesus as One who had merited death, but as your only Savior, Whom God sent unto you, and fully put your trust in Him. In this faith be baptized, everyone of you; then all your guilt will be washed away, you will have forgiveness of sin and also receive the Holy Spirit". Then one after the other came up, confessed his sin, as well as his faith in Christ, and was baptized. In all, three thousand souls were thus added to the disciples of Jesus. You see how the Holy Spirit had worked in their hearts and renewed them. The congregation of believers, the Christian Church had thus been founded; for now there was a body of people who by the Holy Spirit and preaching of the word had been led to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Those people, however, who from their hearts believe in Jesus Christ, make up the Christian Church here on earth.

Thus Jesus kept His promise and sent the Holy Spirit, that He might kindle faith in the hearts of men and make them His disciples. You, children, have also received the Holy Spirit. This happened on the day of your baptism.

When you were baptized, you had your Pentecost. Moreover, God will give His Holy Spirit to all who ask Him for this heavenly gift, and the Holy Spirit will then renew their hearts, making entirely new men out of them. To illustrate this, I must tell you a story. In the penitentiary at B. two boys were being held as prisoners. Though still young in years, they were well experienced in crime, and it had been found necessary to consign them to the state's prison for several years. At the penitentiary no one could do anything with them, their hearts being as hard as stone. But once a devout pastor visited them in their cell, and after he had talked with them in the most kindly spirit, he asked them, "Boys, will you promise me something?" They both answered, "Yes, sir!" "Listen, then," said the pastor: "as often as you hear the bell ring in the little steeple on this building, offer this prayer, 'God, give me Thy Holy Spirit!' Will you do it?" "We will," said the boys. After some time the same pastor again visited the penitentiary, and to his great surprise he was told that the boys had undergone a complete change for the better. The pastor then went to call on them. In the course of their conversation he asked them, "How is it that you have become so entirely changed, that you are now so very friendly toward everybody and so willing to obey your superiors?" They replied, "Do you not remember the advice you gave us, and the promise we made to you? Well, we kept our promise, and from that very hour prayed for the Holy Spirit as often as the bell in the steeple rang; and gradually, almost without our being aware of it, our hearts were changed".

So, children, you have not only received the Holy Spirit by virtue of your baptism, but God will also give you His Holy Spirit in response to your prayer, "God, give me Thy Holy Spirit". And if you do not willfully resist Him, He will work within your hearts and renew them. You will then be

true disciples of Jesus, believing in Him, and doing the will of your Father in heaven, according to His example.

26. Of Godly Abraham Who in Faith Left His Home.

Children, I know a man who lived about 4000 years ago, but who is still remembered throughout the world. We Christians know him and call him "father of believers"; the Jews know him and are proud to call him their forefather, from whom they are all descended; even the Turks and all the Mohammedans in Asia and Africa know him and hold him in high regard. In the Holy Land people show you the very place where he was buried 4000 years ago, and take pride in the different places where he once planted trees. When we die, we shall soon be forgotten. The names of noted men are remembered somewhat longer. After a few hundred years have passed away, however, only men of learning continue to be interested in them. But the man whom I have in mind, although he lived 4000 years ago, is still familiar to the common people in America and Europe, and to many, many in Africa and Asia. Would you not like to hear the name of this remarkable man, who after thousands of years is still so widely known? His name was **Abraham.** (What was his name?) Since Abraham was such a godly and able man, about whom the Bible tells us so many good things, and of whom you children also have a great deal to learn, I shall today and on the following Sundays relate to you some of the more important events in his life. Today let us hear **how Abraham, as a man of faith, left his home.**

Four thousand years ago, the world in many respects looked different than at the present time. There probably were no people living here in America, and in Europe they did not live nearly so closely together as they do now. Most of the people at that time dwelt in Asia, especially in the west-

ern part of that continent, between the Mediterranean Sea and the two rivers known as the Euphrates and the Tigris, between the Caucasus Mountains and Egypt. On Mount Ararat (map!), you will recall, Noah's ark rested after the great flood, and down here (map!) the tower of Babel was built, from which people were scattered into all lands. At first, Abraham, about whom I want to tell you, also lived in these regions. His home was in the city of Ur in Chaldea (what was the name of that city? in what country was Ur located? Map!). He was a sort of cattle king. He lived together with his father Terah and with his brothers Nahor and Haran. They had many thousands of sheep, cattle and camels, as well as hundreds of man-servants and maid-servants to take care of them. Abraham, his father and his brothers dwelt in the city of Ur, but their servants herded the large flocks out in the fields.

People at that time had already made considerable progress in various ways. They could build large cities with high walls surrounding them; they knew how to dig canals, through which to let in the water from the rivers, that it might moisten the dry and barren lands; they were also familiar with work on the farm, sowing and reaping all kinds of grain. They had learned to weave cloth and make fine garments out of it; to make use of the precious gold in the manufacture of bracelets and other articles of jewelry. They even knew how to write, and when a prince or a king had done something great, they would write long stories about it on clay slates. That was doubtlessly quite in accord with God's will. He likes to see men make use of their wits and increase their store of knowledge. Something else, however, surely did not please Him, but made Him feel deeply grieved. You see, people had wholly forgotten Him, their Creator, to whom they owed their very life and everything else. They should have thanked Him daily for all His good gifts, and if they had done this, they would not have forgotten Him. But they

failed to raise the voice of thanksgiving, and so the same thing happened to them that happens to people now who no longer pray to God and have stopped going to church. Such people forget more and more that there is a God whom we do not see, but who Himself sees and knows everything, whose power has no limits and who must lay His divine blessing upon all our work, in order that it may be crowned with success. They finally come to live in such a way as if there were no God whom one must love, or of whom one must stand in awe. People of this type, who no longer know God and do not even care to hear of Him any more, are called heathen. And that is what the people who lived in the time of Abraham had come to be. They still knew, of course, that they could not do a great many wonderful things that took place in their sight. For it was not in there power to make the grass grow, to let the rain fall down from the clouds and moisten the soil when it was dry. They were not able to keep their cattle in good health and to increase their number. They could not even guard themselves against sickness and disease. They felt that some one stronger than they must exist. But they turned their thoughts away from God and began to worship things in nature. Seeing that all life is dependent upon the sun, and that the soft light of the moon also serves a good purpose, they looked upon these heavenly bodies as the source of the power upon which all things depend. When in the morning the sun rose in the east like a fiery ball, they would fall down before it, worship it and say, "O sun, thou source of all life, to thee we must offer thanks for life, and health, and all that we enjoy". Or, when the moon shone so kindly at night, and when in its mellow light their pastures thrived, so that their cattle had plenty of grass to eat, they also bowed down before the moon and prayed to it, saying, "O gentle moon, fountain of all growth and prosperity, thou sheddest they blessing upon man and beast; for this we thank thee most heartily". At Ur in Chaldea, where Abraham, his

father and his brothers had their home, people were especially given to the worship of the moon. We still have a prayer that they used in worshiping this heavenly body. They wrote the prayer, and thus it came to be preserved. They had forgotten the God whom they could not see, and, instead of calling upon Him, they worshiped the sun and the moon, which they could see with their eyes. That it is God who has the sun and the moon shine for us, and thereby blesses and prospers His creatures here on earth, this great truth they no longer understood. No wonder that God felt grieved; or should it not grieve a father if his children forget him wholly and completely, and do not want to have anything to do with him any more?

Terah, the father of Abraham, also had begun to worship the moon, although he still knew the living God who made heaven and earth. That may be the reason why God, in the course of time, put into Terah's heart the thought of leaving Ur in Chaldea and go to another land, in order that the knowledge of the living God might not be lost to the world entirely. Had Terah remained among the heathen who surrounded him in Ur, he and his family might also have completely forgotten the living God. However that may be, Terah one day started out from Ur in Chaldea and moved to another country. He took with him his two sons, Abraham and Nahor. Haran had already died. But he also took along all of his cattle. Then, too, there were any number of servants whom he kept in his employ. All these, together with their wives and children, accompanied him. In all, there may have been in that company from 2000—3000 people, not to mention the thousands of sheep and cattle and camels. There is many a county here in America that does not contain so many people and animals as there were in the company of Terah when he left Ur in Chaldea, to look for another place of residence. They traveled in a northwestern direction, always following the course of the Euphrates River. It may be that they

wanted to go to the land of Canaan. The way to that land, at that time as at present, did not lead straightly westward, but rather took one first toward the northwest and then toward the southwest; for between Chaldea and Canaan there lies a great desert which furnishes neither water nor food to sustain the life of man and beast (map!). But when they came to Haran in Mesopotamia, a land that is bordered by the two mighty rivers of which we have already spoken, the Euphrates and the Tigris, Terah liked it there so well that he said, "Come, let us stay here! Here we have pasture for our herds, here there is plenty of water for all, here there are high trees in whose cool shade one may sit down, nor are there so many people living here that we would have to feel crowded." And he did stay. Nothing more was said of continuing the journey. Indeed, they had already traveled long and far enough. So Terah made arrangements for permanently staying at Haran in Mesopotamia. Abraham and Nahor also remained there. And the longer Terah and his sons lived in Haran, the better they were pleased with their new home. He more than made a good living. His cattle prospered. His herds grew larger from year to year. His gold and silver also increased. He and his sons grew very, very rich.

But in the region of Haran people also had learned to worship the moon, and it was not long until Terah did the same thing. At first it only happened now and then, but soon it became a regular habit with him. So it did not better conditions that God had led Terah away from his heathen surroundings at Ur. Things rather went from bad to worse. For Nahor followed the bad example of his father, the servants did the same, and soon the whole tribe had become heathen, worshiping the moon. How this saddened God's heart! What was He to do with the world, since the people living in it had all forgotten Him and become heathen? Should He send another great flood and destroy them? They surely

had deserved it. But God is a God of mercy, and therefore He preferred to make the people free again from their sin and lead them back to faith in Him, the living God. He is also a faithful God and keeps His promises. You will remember that right after the fall, while Adam and Eve were still in Paradise, God promised them a Savior, who would save the people from sin and prompt them again to have faith in the true God that made heaven and earth. This Savior was to be born as a real member of the human family. But among what people was He to be born, if there were to be any who would believe in Him? That was a hard question to answer, since all the people of the earth had turned heathen. However, God knew what was to be done. He had kept **one** man who still believed in Him as the living God. This man did not worship the sun, nor the moon, nor any other creature, but only the invisible God in heaven.

He also rejoiced to see the sun rise in the morning and to watch the shining moon at night; but instead of thanking the sun and the moon for the light that gladdened his heart, he offered his thanks to the God who made them, both the sun and the moon, and lets them shine for the benefit of those who inhabit the earth. This one man was Terah's son, Abraham. No doubt, the neighbors, his father and his brothers often would say to him, "Why don't you do as we do? Are you going to be the one and only exception? Is it not better to worship a god that can be seen than one who is invisible?" But Abraham remained firm. Yes, God Himself made him firm, because He had great plans in the carrying out of which Abraham was to take a prominent part. Let us hear of some of the things that God had in store for Abraham. He wanted to set him apart from all other men, take him alone by himself and train him in an ever growing faith in Him, so that he would expect salvation and eternal happiness from Him only. He wanted to give him a large and beautiful **land** and therein make him the forefather of a great **people,** which

was to have faith in Him and from which, in due time, the Savior was to spring, whom He had promised in Paradise and through whom all men were to be brought back to their heavenly Father. Ah, it was indeed something very great and wonderful that God was going to do with Abraham and that He was planning to bring about through this one man. I am sure you are already beginning to see why the name of Abraham, after the long lapse of 4000 years, is still known in the whole world.

Since God intended to accomplish such wonderful things through Abraham, He appeared to him, that is, the invisible God took on the form of an angel, or of a man, and suddenly stood before him in heavenly glory, so that He was visible to Abraham, who could, therefore, see Him, and who knew at once that it was God talking to him. And this is what God said to him: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee". Children, that was asking a great deal of Abraham. Only think, he was to depart from his country, leaving Haran, where he had gotten along so well, where he had such fine pasture for his herds, and where his cattle thrived as never before. Who is there among you that would care to leave his home and country here in America? Abraham was also to turn away from his kindred, from his brother Nahor and all the other people that belonged to his relationship. He was to get out from among them because they had become heathen, and to be alone on his way through life. When friends and others whom we know go with us, it is somewhat easier for us to leave our home, but Abraham was to leave all his friends and acquaintances behind. It was the hardest thing of all for Abraham that God told him to get himself out of his father's house, to take leave of his aged father, never to see him again here on earth. The right kind of a son clings to his father, and a pain shoots through his heart when he is asked to leave him forever. So it was

something very hard that God required of Abraham. It was all the harder because Abraham did not even know to what land God wanted him to go. God Himself knew well enough how painful it would be for Abraham to obey the command which He had given him. Therefore, He went on to tell him of the good things that he would do for him in that new land. He said, "For I will there make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed". That was indeed a great promise; well might it encourage Abraham to perform the hard task which God had ordered him to take upon himself. He, the **one** man, was to develop into a mighty nation; God was going to be with him and with this people everywhere; He was going to make his name great, so that it would be still mentioned after hundreds and thousands of years should have passed away; and by him and his offspring the blessing of God was to come upon all nations, since the Savior was to come forth from among the descendants of Abraham and lead all people back to God.

What did Abraham do? Children, he certainly did not find it easy to do according to God's command. It caused him many a pain, and he passed through a great inner struggle; for he loved his country, his brothers and his father, even though they had forgotten God and worshiped the moon. Besides, Abraham himself did not know nearly as much of the living God as we do. But his faith prompted him firmly to trust that God was telling him the truth when he spoke to him of the new land and the good fortune awaiting him therein. Having such faith in God, he said to Him, "Yes, I am ready; I will leave my home and follow Thee to whatever place Thou wilt lead me".

When Abraham returned to his brother Nahor, he said to him, "My God has appeared to me and told me to go into another land, and I intend to do so". But you may imagine what kind of a speech Nahor delivered to his brother Abra-

ham. "What", said he, "will you leave me, your brother, and depart for a land that you do not even know by name? Will you go away from Haran, this beautiful country in which you have prospered so well, giving up the sure for the doubtful, the visible for the invisible? Go to, Abraham, you certainly will be very foolish if you do such a thing". But Abraham could not be budged; he simply replied, "My God has commanded me to do as I have told you; I must and will obey Him. My God has also promised me a great fortune in that strange land; I firmly believe that He will keep His word". Abraham's old father, Terah, also tried to talk him out of the whole matter. Terah was then 145 years old, and near death's door. "Stay with us", said he, "why should you leave me, your aged father, when I may die at any time? Think of the dangers that you may encounter on the way! And you do not even know where you are going!" Such words, coming from the lips of his father, made it very hard for Abraham to leave his home. But his mind was made up. Said he to his father, "Dear father, one must obey God rather than men. I know that the way is uncertain; but God will be my guide. I am aware of the dangers that I may have to meet; but I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, who will be with me and shield me; He 'who points the clouds their course, whom winds and seas obey, He shall direct my wandering feet, He shall prepare my way' ". Children, that is what one calls faith. We have faith when we, like Abraham, firmly trust in God. For the Bible calls faith the firm assurance of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen.

Without waiting any longer, Abraham now got everything in readiness for his departure. His father divided the herds and gave Abraham his share of them. He also appointed many servants who were to go with him and attend to the many sheep and cattle and camels. Nor did he fail to provide him with plenty of gold and silver. Then came

the day of his departure. Abraham bade his father and his brother farewell. He took leave of all that was dear to him. Then he, his wife Sarah, and Lot, the son of his brother Haran, who wanted to go with him, were seated upon the backs of little riding donkeys and rode away, traveling on the great mercantile road which leads in a southwestern direction from Haran to Canaan. Abraham was followed by a great, long train of man-servants and maid-servants, riding on donkeys and camels, and driving many, many cattle and sheep. Since Terah and Abraham had grown very rich in Haran, his train must have been made up of about 1500 souls, together with many thousands of domestic animals. Abraham trusted that God would lead him in the right way. If at any time he was to leave the great mercantile highway, God would let him know it. Thus he moved along, farther and farther away from his home. The journey was not without its hardships. The way upon which he traveled soon led through a desert where wells were rare, where there was no shade, and where there were but few fertile spots upon which the cattle could graze. The way was also dangerous. At any time a band of riders might have overtaken Abraham, driven away his cattle, and led both him and his many servants into slavery. And the journey was one of great length. Ordinarily, by riding along at a good pace, one could make the trip from Haran to the middle of Canaan in about 200 hours. But Abraham had to move along rather slowly, if he did not want to overdrive his cattle, and he may have spent several weeks on the road. During this time, all kinds of thoughts may have arisen in his mind. He would say to himself, "Would it not have been better, Abraham, if you had stayed at home? Is it not foolish of you to travel along in such uncertainty? The others are at home now and resting, while you are on this long and tiresome journey!" However, he did not allow such thoughts to lead him astray. Ever and again he recalled what God had promised him, and

he cheered his heart by saying, "God will most surely keep His promise. 'Commit thy ways to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass'". It was faith, children, that made Abraham think and talk thus. For what does the Bible say? "Faith is the firm assurance of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen." Having this faith, this firm assurance, Abraham always felt cheered again after moments of despondency, and was able quietly to continue on his way, with the assurance, "All will turn out right in the end".

And, children, everything did turn out well. Soon he came to the city of Damascus. There he could rest for a while and lay in new supplies; there he also bought several man-servants and maid-servants, who went with him. A suburb of Damascus was hundreds of years later still called "the dwelling place of Abraham". But Abraham did not remain in the beautiful region of Damascus. His God bade him go further, and further he went. Again he passed through desert land, but shortly things began to look more cheerful. There were hills and valleys, rivers and brooks, with the finest land lying between them. But Abraham moved onward. He wanted to continue on his way until God should bid him stop. Thus he came to the region of Shechem, right in the heart of Canaan. The country was enchantingly beautiful. Along the slopes of the hills grew the grape vine, in the valleys one could see delicious southern fruits grow on the trees, and stretching out among these trees were fertile fields and juicy meadows. Never before had Abraham seen such a land. It was a thousand times more beautiful than Ur in Chaldea and Haran in Mesopotamia, the countries from which he had come. That must have made him think, "Oh, if this were the land that God wanted to give you, how delightful!" Just then and there God did appear to him, saying to him, "This land will I give to thee and to thy offspring". This is the moment which the artist has fixed here in the picture. Here we see Abraham and his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot on

their donkeys; back of them is seen the long train of camels, with the man-servants and maid-servants. They have come to the top of a hill from which they can overlook the beautiful land in all directions. Just at this moment the Lord, through an angel, appears to Abraham and says to him, "This land will I give thee and thy offspring". Abraham's face looks as if it were all aglow with emotion, showing how happy he is because of what has taken place, and how thankful he feels toward God.

Glad he was, to be sure! He said to himself, "My faith, then, has not disappointed me; my God has made good His word; He was with me on my way; He has brought me into this beautiful land; now I am sure that He will keep all His promises. Henceforth I shall depend upon Him altogether; He will make of me a great nation, and He will bring it to pass that in me and my offspring all nations shall be blessed".

So happy and thankful was Abraham that he quickly gathered some stones and placed them one upon the other, slew a tender lamb, laid it upon the stones and set fire to it, thus offering it to God. Calling together his people, he knelt down in their presence before the altar and thanked God out of the fullness of his heart for having kept His word, led him so faithfully, and brought him into the promised land. Then he arose, and before all his people, as well as before the people who lived in and around Shechem, he preached the great truth, "There is only one God in heaven and on earth. He can not ordinarily be seen with the eyes of man, but it is He who made heaven and earth, and who is Lord over all. He alone can shape and rule our lives; commit your ways to Him and trust in Him with all your heart; He does all things well". When Abraham said these words, not a few of his servants may have nodded their heads, as if they meant to say, "Yes, our master is right, we can prove it". The people of Shechem, however, also must have listened to his words

most eagerly, for they had never heard anything like it, since they were heathen and knew nothing of the living God.

What will you do, children? Will you not learn of Abraham that the best thing you can do is always to obey God, and to trust that He will do all things well? Yes, children, let us extend our hands to God and say, "Take then my hands, O Father, and lead Thou me until my journey endeth, eternally. Alone I can not wander one single day; be Thou my true Companion, and with me stay". At all times, but especially when we are called upon to do something hard, when we must leave father and mother and enter life outside, or when we lose father and mother entirely and are left alone in the world, let us say to ourselves:

"Commit thou all thy griefs
And ways into His hands,
To His sure truth and tender care,
Who earth and heaven commands:
Who points the clouds their course,
Whom winds and seas obey,
He shall direct thy wandering feet,
He shall prepare thy way."

27. How Abraham Preferred to be Separated From Lot Rather Than Live in Strife and Contention.

The last time, children, I told you how God appeared to Abraham over there in Haran of Mesopotamia, and said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. There I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." We rejoiced to hear that Abraham, trusting in this promise, obeyed God's command and left his coun-

try. Then, when we were told how fatherly God protected Abraham and brought him at last into the wonderfully beautiful land of Canaan, we made up our minds to follow Abraham's example, and said to ourselves, "We shall do as Abraham did, always obeying God's command, and confidently trusting that in this case He will ever be with us."—Now, how did Abraham continue to fare in the land of Canaan? Did God give him the threefold gift which He had promised him, land, people and blessing? This is what you would like to hear, and this is what I shall relate to you. But let us not move along too hastily. It will be much better for us to proceed rather slowly and consider one thing after another at our leisure. The life of Abraham is too beautiful to be gone over at a rapid flight. There is a certain advantage in rushing across the country in a fast train; it saves time and one soon reaches his destination. However, if we want to view the scenery and here and there pick a flower along the road, the fast train does not help us; it is far better for us to use our feet and walk at a slow pace. So we shall take our own time and study the life of Abraham very carefully, in order that it may give us pleasure and teach us many a wholesome lesson. Today let me tell you **how Abraham preferred to be separated from Lot rather than live in strife and contention.**

In the region of Shechem (map!) God had appeared to Abraham and said to him, "This is the land that I will give to thee and to thy offspring." Here Abraham, therefore, pitched his tents. A large, distinguished looking tent upon a firm foundation stood in the middle. It probably was more oblong than round and consisted of stakes across which furs or thick carpets were stretched, allowing no rain to pass through them. The floor also was covered with rugs and carpets. By means of costly curtains, the inside of the tent was most likely divided off into two or three rooms. This fine tent was for Abraham himself. Beside it stood another tent, likewise fine

and firm, and well furnished; it was Sarah's tent, for the women of the wealthy class used to live in a separate tent, together with their servants. Around these two tents, in which Abraham and his wife lived, there were many, many more tents for Abraham's servants and their families. It was a large settlement, equal in size to many a small city. At the side, forming a group by themselves, were the tents of Lot, his wife and his children, his man-servants and his maid-servants; for Lot had come with Abraham from Haran to Canaan.

From this encampment at Shechem, the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot started out with their herds, now in this, now in that direction, staying away for weeks at a time, and allowing the animals to graze on the fertile plains around Shechem. The Canaanites who lived in the land did not raise many cattle and often lived so far apart that vast stretches of land were not used at all. To such places the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot led their large herds. When the grass in the neighborhood of Shechem was all eaten, Abraham took down his tents, moved to another region and there set them up again. Thus, in the region west of Shechem, on the plain of Sharon (map!), were unusually good and large grazing places; and southeast of Shechem lay the well watered region around Jericho, where at that time many shady palm trees made the land specially inviting to herdsmen (map!). When about the month of November the wintry, or rather the rainy, season sets in—for it seldom snows in Palestine and if any snow does fall, it melts again the same day—then the grass in those plains grows most luxuriantly. In May, when the hot summer season began, Abraham would take his herd back into the mountainous regions, where the heat was less oppressive, and where, on the northern slopes of the hills and mountains, grass was to be found also during the hottest season of the year. The mountain chains of Ephraim and Judah, with the ancient city of Hebron and

their numerous fountains of water, were particulary good places for herdsmen to stay during the summer. At times it might indeed happen that the intense heat burned up all the grass. Thus Abraham once took his herds down as far as Egypt, because in Palestine everything was so dry and parched that he had to be afraid his cattle would starve for lack of food. For you must remember, children, that Abraham and Lot had very large herds of cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels. There were thousands of them, large and small, when they came to Canaan, and here they had grown still more numerous. It did not take these herds long to make a grazing place look bare, and they also needed a great deal of water.

Now, when such a dry spell set in, or when Abraham and Lot had pitched their tents in a place where the grass was rather scarce any way, or where the Canaanites lived together somewhat closely, it could easily happen that both the herds of Abraham and those of Lot could not stay in the same place at one and the same time, the land not being able to supply enough food for them. Such a thing really occurred when Abraham had pitched his tents in the mountainous region of Bethel (map!). There the Canaanites were quite thickly settled, and the pastures were more scarce than in the low plains; they also lay somewhat far apart. We can easily understand what took place under such circumstances. While the herdsmen of Abraham, with their herds, were in a certain fertile spot, where the grass grew and where there was plenty of water, the herdsmen of Lot, with their herds, chanced to come to the same region. They perhaps had no idea of meeting Abraham's herdsmen there, with their thousands of cattle; but having arrived at such a stretch of good land, they did not want to retreat, nor were the herdsmen of Abraham willing to withdraw. Naturally, the two groups of herdsmen then began to quarrel with each other about the pasturage. They may not always have contented themselves with

harsh words. At times they may have come to blows. They swung their long staffs and carried on a regular battle; for we must remember that there were hundreds of them. Such strife, brought on by the meeting of Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen in a region where the pastures were small and meager, was a bad thing in more than one respect. It was not good for the herds, because they were thus driven back and forth, while they needed rest and peace if they were to thrive. That is why a farmer gets rid of his dog if it chases the cattle while they are grazing in the pasture. It was not good for the herdsmen, since many a one returned home with a black eye or a wounded head. But if it was not good for the herds and the herdsmen, then it was not good either for Abraham and Lot, to whom both belonged, and whose wealth consisted of these very herds and herdsmen. Besides, if the herdsmen quarreled with each other, their masters might also become partners in the strife. Thus Abraham and Lot would no longer have lived together in peace. That, however, would have been a sad state of affairs. They were the only ones in that whole land who had come from Mesopotamia, and, besides, they were very closely related. What would the people of Canaan have said if Abraham and Lot had begun to quarrel and fight with each other? They would have said, "These are pretty strangers; why, they live together like cat and dog; the one is envious of the other and can not bear to see him thrive well." And since they knew that Abraham did not want to have anything to do with their idolatry, but worshiped only the living God, they would have pointed at Abraham with the finger, saying, "Look at him, he wants to be better than we, and can not even live in peace with his nephew, nor make his servants stop their quarreling and fighting." Above all things, children, God would have been displeased with such a state of affairs. He does not like strife and contention; least is He pleased when people quarrel about their property. God likes to see people

live together in peace. He says in His word, "Behold, how good and how amiable it is for the brethren to live together in unity", and again, "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God". God would rather have us give in than stubbornly to fight for our so-called rights. He desires that we should be willing to lose part of our be-longings, rather than start a quarrel about them. And sure-ly there can be nothing worse than that we displease God. That is what Abraham thought, too, and so he said to him-self, "This thing can not go on any longer. If the land will not permit that our herds graze together in the same place, then we simply must part. If our living together leads to nothing but quarrel and strife, then the land must be divided, and we must draw a fixed line which in the future neither group of herdsmen will dare to cross". But who do you think was entitled to draw the border-line and to have the first choice of the land to be divided? Was Abraham or Lot to choose first? The question was not doubtful at all. Abra-ham was the older of the two; Lot was much younger than he. Abraham was Lot's uncle, and Lot was to respect him as a father, who had taken him into his care. Abraham had been the leader when they left Mesopotamia, Lot having only received permission to join him and being wholly dependent upon him. Chiefly, however, we must consider the fact that God had promised Abraham the whole land of Canaan; from the viewpoint of God, therefore, the land already belonged to Abraham. So according to divine and human right, Abra-ham was the one entitled to draw the dividing line. If he had said, "This and that portion of the land I will keep for myself, of the rest, you, Lot, may take what you please", he would have been entirely within his rights. Such action on his part would have been altogether fair.

But now, children, let me tell you how Abraham went about the matter. He went over to Lot and said to him, "Dear Lot, let there not be strife between me and thee, be-

tween my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land open before thee? If thou wilt take the land that lies to the left, I will take that that lies to the right, and if thou wilt go to the right, I will go to the left". Not a word of reproof do we hear from him with regard to Lot and his herdsmen. He does not say, "Had I known that on your account I would have to live in constant strife, I surely would have left you in Haran". No, not a word of this! Abraham does not even demand what he had a right to demand; he does not choose the best land for himself, leaving Lot to take what remains. He acts as if Lot had a title to all the land, and as if he, Abraham, had no claim to it at all. How could Abraham act thus? Children, he acted in this way because he regarded peace higher than his right. His action was such as if he had already learned the New Testament verse, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men", and that other one, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth". He was ready to give up his right, and to lose his advantage, if he could but have peace, and keep from displeasing God by strife and contention. Children, that is what I call peaceable; that is what I call unselfish; that is what I call pious and God-fearing. Only he can act like this who trusts his God and says to himself, "For the sake of peace I will give up my right; my God will care for me, that I may not lack anything". O what a fine specimen of man Abraham was! He showed himself to be peaceable, unselfish, and full of trust in God. One really can not help liking him.

How did Lot reply to Abraham's generous behavior toward him? Was he unselfish, like Abraham? Did he follow the example of his uncle by not thinking of his own advantage, but rather seeking that of his older relative? Is this what he said: "O Abraham, I am not worthy of your generous offer; you make your own choice first; I will be content to take what is left"? O no, children! Lot was selfish

and only thought of what he might gain if the land were divided. He said to himself, "The chances are good, and I must make use of them; who knows whether they will ever come to me again?" So he lifted up his eyes, perhaps much as you do when you want to see which piece of meat on the platter is the largest, in order that you may make sure of it. From the highlands near Bethel, he once more took a good look at the whole country, so that he might by all means select the best part of it for himself. The thought as to where Abraham would stay with his herds, did not trouble him in the least. The most fertile section of which Lot knew, and which he could probably see from his high position near Bethel, was the valley of the Jordan. Today it is wholly worthless, but at that time it was the most valuable part of the entire land. People compared it with the garden of Eden, the beautiful Paradise, and with the land of the Egyptians, which in those days was famous the world over because of its rich fertility. Lot therefore pointed his finger in that direction and said, "There, the valley of the Jordan east of us, down to the region of Sodom and Gomorrah, and to both sides of the Dead Sea,—that is my choice!" (Map!)

This was a low and unsightly deed. Lot had shown himself so ungrateful and selfish that it would not be surprising if Abraham had given his nephew a good talking on account of his meanness. He surely had deserved it. But Abraham kept his temper and quietly accepted Lot's decision. Although only the higher parts of the land remained for him, where the pastures were not so rich, he offered no word of reproach or complaint. For the sake of peace, he had offered Lot the privilege of making his choice. Now that Lot had chosen, he looked upon the matter as having been settled. He really preferred to yield his good right, rather than start a new quarrel. If any word of reproach tried to escape his lips, he kept it back and swallowed it. That was acting bravely, unselfishly and nobly, but it was by no means an easy

matter. It seemed especially hard when Lot at once took down his tents, loaded them on camels and with all that he had passed by Abraham on his way down to the valley of the Jordan. How could Abraham bear all this? How could he keep still, yield his right, allow the best part of the land to slip away from him, and even wish Lot a happy journey? Abraham could do all this because he believed in God and trustfully thought, "My God, who promised this land to my offspring, will see to it that I shall not suffer want". In a word, he feared and loved God, as the Catechism requires this of us, and he trusted in God with all his heart. For this reason he was able to act as he did.

Nor was Abraham disappointed in his firm trust that God would make ample provision for him, and keep His promise in every detail. Hardly had Lot departed from him and occupied the best part of the land, when God said to Abraham, "Lift up thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy offspring forever". Had not Abraham, then, after all, chosen the better part if he could see that his God was with him and favored him by the renewal of His great promise? Indeed, children; for there is nothing more precious than to know, "My God is with me!" And why did God tell Abraham this just now, and give him such a blessed assurance in his heart? Because Abraham had shown himself peaceable and would rather suffer a decrease in his earthly possessions than live in strife.

It seems to me, children, that in this respect you could learn much from Abraham. Or do you not also, at times, quarrel with each other about the biggest piece of cake, about the best apple, about the warmest place in the sun when you play outside? Do you not at such times act according to the principle, "One must look out for himself first, last and always?" Do you not frequently lay claim to a place be-

cause you "were there first"? And in making this claim your eyes glare and you may even ball your fists. That was not what Abraham did. He would rather yield his right than quarrel about it. And thereby he pleased both God and man, so much so, that we talk about it even today, after the lapse of 4000 years. Will you not learn of Abraham and let others have the largest piece and the best place if thereby you can avoid strife and contention? Surely you will want to do this, even though it may seem hard at times.— Remember, "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God".

28. How Abraham Proved to be a Friend in Need.

"The devout are cowardly people and never venture anything", this is what we sometimes hear folks say who are not devout themselves, and therefore like to make the devout appear in an unfavorable light. But is such criticism true, children? Are the devout really cowards who will take no risk either in their own interest or in that of others? It must be admitted that certain people who imagine themselves to be very pious show no courage whatever when danger must be met, when it becomes necessary to undertake a task that may imply severe losses, whether it be of property or life itself. However, such people are not truly devout; God will not thus regard them. Those possessed of genuine piety have ever, when the occasion arose, shown themselves courageous. Was not David a devout man? And now consider how he met the giant Goliath. In the whole army there was not one who had the courage to meet the giant, but little David ventured to confront him. He did it for the very reason that he was a pious young man and trusted in God. Was not the apostle Paul a devout man? And now recall how fearlessly he appeared before kings and emperors, how boldly he confessed his faith in Jesus Christ, and how he finally laid his

head on the executioner's block in preference to denying his beloved Master. Or what, children, shall we say of Dr. Martin Luther? Surely, he was also a pious man, and do you know what answer he gave his friends when they advised him not to go to Worms because his life would there be endangered? "If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs, still I will go there and confess Christ", that is what he answered them. Does that sound as if he had been afraid to meet a dangerous situation? Most decidedly not. And now let me remind you of the missionaries. They are sent out into strange lands, that they may preach the Gospel to the heathen. Often this is a most dangerous undertaking. For in some of the heathen countries the climate is very unhealthy, and the natives are savage people who sometimes kill the missionaries. Yet these brave men will not allow themselves to be kept back. They will go to the heathen and risk their own lives to bring salvation to others. Therefore, children, those people tell a big lie who say, "The devout are cowardly people and never venture anything". That the devout do venture something, venture a great deal when it is necessary, even life itself, this you will be made to see as I proceed to tell you **how Abraham proved himself to be a friend in need.**

Lot had taken his herds down into the valley of the Jordan, where he finally pitched his tents here toward the south (map!), near the city of Sodom. O, that was a fertile and highly favored land, containing rich pastures and abundant water. Lot could not have wished for a better region, and many a time he may have said to himself, "Was it not prudent of me to settle here? Yes, I have chosen the best part of the land". But "all is not gold that glitters". He was soon to find out that after all he had made a very poor choice. The people of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and greatly sinned against God. They were much worse than all the other heathen living round about them. As a rule, the more people

prosper, the more overbearing and godless they become. That this was also true of the people living in Sodom, Lot doubtlessly had known beforehand; but his greed for the best land was so great that he did not think of anything else. However, now that he had erected his tents right in the vicinity of Sodom, he was made to feel that it is rather a dangerous thing to have such earthly minded and godless neighbors. His wife soon took pleasure in the sinful life of the Sodomites, and his two daughters before long kept company with two young men who dwelt in the wicked city, and Lot himself thought too much of earthly gain to warn them earnestly. Sin, children, is like the breath of the pest that spreads disease and death wherever it is found; and when one lets go of God's hand, in order to choose his own ways, as Lot did by selfishly choosing the fruitful Jordan valley for his dwelling place, God allows such a one to leave, but He does not go with him; He wants to let him find out into what misery and heartache these self-chosen ways lead. It was bad enough that Lot had to live among such godless neighbors as the people of Sodom were. But worse things were in store for him. He was suddenly to lose all his property and he himself was to be carried away as a slave. It happened in this way. The land bordering on the Jordan, surrounding the Dead Sea and stretching far beyond those regions, at that time belonged to the king of Elam, whose name was Chedorlaomer. He was then lord over all the land from the Persian Gulf up to Haran in Mesopotamia, and from there over to Syria, and from there down through the Jordan valley to the Elanitic Gulf. (Map!) The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as three other cities near by, namely, Zeboiim, Admah and Zoar, were also under his dominion. They indeed had each their own king, but every year they had to pay a considerable amount in taxes to Chedorlaomer. For twelve years these five cities, and very likely also the different tribes in the neighborhood, along the whole eastern side

of the Jordan, had paid the required sum. But in the thirteenth year they no longer recognized Chedorlaomer as their superior. Most likely they thought, "We are living so far away from Elam, and together with the tribes in our nighborhood we are so strong that Chedorlaomer will not venture to come here and try to collect taxes from us". But they were mistaken. Chedorlaomer took his soldiers and with a strong army started out for Palestine. From Elam he went to Mesopotamia, and from Mesopotamia he came to Syria, and passing through Damascus, as Abraham had done when he was on the road to Canaan, he followed the course of the Jordan river on the east side, until he had reached the country surrounding the Dead Sea. Here he first made war on all the strong tribes in the neighborhood of the sea: the Rephaims and the Zuzims in the north, the Emims in the east, the Horites and the Amalekites in the south. After that he moved against the five cities in the vale of Siddim, where the Dead Sea is located. A battle was fought. It was lost by the five cities. Chedorlaomer conquered Sodom, seized all that he could find in the way of silver and gold, sheep, cattle and camels, took the strong and healthy men, as well as many, many women, captive, and dragged them away as slaves. Since Lot lived in the vicinity of Sodom, they also took him and all his cattle. Then they turned to the north again along the Jordan River (map!), intending to go back to Elam, richly laden with the booty.

Thus Lot had lost everything, and he himself was a captive. By this time he may have thought, "I did not choose wisely after all; what good is the fruitful Jordan valley going to do me now? I have lost everything and they are bearing me away into a strange country, while Abraham in the western highlands is pertectly safe". Perhaps he also felt a little ashamed of himself for having acted so selfishly toward his uncle. Would Abraham now think of coming to his rescue? Lot perhaps said to himself, "That he can not

do; for the army of Chedorlaomer is too large and powerful; nor can I expect him to venture anything for me after I have been treating him so unfairly; I surely have not deserved any aid from him". Lot himself saw no way out of his troubles; he had abandoned all hope of being rescued.

Did Abraham share this hopeless outlook? Was he perhaps even glad when he heard what had happened to Lot? Children, you surely could not think thus of Abraham. Such a really pious man as Abraham was could not rejoice over the misfortune of his near relative. But did he have enough courage to venture something for Lot's release? Let us see.

It may have been in the middle of the night, when suddenly the dogs that watched Abraham's tents began to bark loudly. Covered with sweat and dust, a man came running up to the tents. He wanted to speak to Abraham. Soon he stood before him and said, "Chedorlaomer has conquered the king of Sodom, captured the city, and taken with him men and women, gold and silver, cattle and everything that is of value. He has also taken along Lot, your nephew. Only a few of us escaped to the mountains; I am one of them; I have come in the greatest hurry to bring you the sad news". When Abraham heard this, he was deeply moved. He did not rub his hands in glee, saying, "It serves him right; because of his selfishness he fully deserved such misfortune; God is still a just God and must punish the sinner". No, Abraham was heartily sorry when he heard what a calamity had befallen Lot. He had long since forgiven him. It was not necessary for him first to learn the proverb, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth". He knew that one can not love God and at the same time rejoice in the misfortune of a fellow-man. All that he thought of now was the fate of Lot and the people of Sodom. "Poor Lot", said he to himself, "what will become of you in the hands of the enemy? They will drag you to Elam, and there they will sell you as a dumb animal is

sold; you will be separated from your wife and children, and compelled to perform the most menial service of a slave". But then Abraham aroused himself and said further, "No, this must not be as long as I have life and health. He is the son of my brother; I promised to take care of him; I must help him, I must chase after the enemies and deliver him out of their hands". Already he wanted to give the necessary orders, when suddenly he stopped again; for an inner voice said to him, "Abraham, you can not do it. Chedorlaomer has a strong army; he has thousands of soldiers who from their youth are skilled in the use of weapons; you, on the other hand, have but a few hundred servants, and while they may be good shepherds, they know nothing about war-craft. The army of Chedorlaomer has conquered all the people round about, although they were very strong, had giants among them and fought in many a battle; you can not think seriously of fighting them; the army of that mighty king also has experienced leaders, while you have never been engaged in warfare. Besides, how are you going to overtake them? They have several days the start of you, and you can not think of catching up with them. Stay at home, Abraham; your intentions are good, but you can not carry them into effect; it would be love's labor lost if you should make any attempt to bring Lot back". Abraham thought deeply; he plainly saw that the inner voice was right in many things; he realized that it would be a hard task to help Lot and the people of Sodom; he told himself in so many words that by his own power he could accomplish nothing, and that if he depended upon his own efforts, he would but make a laughingstock of himself. But then another voice asserted itself in his heart, which said, "Where men are too weak to lend help, God is still able to come to the rescue of those who are in trouble. He is stronger than the whole army of Chedorlaomer. Whc trusts in God's unchanging love builds on the Rock that naught can move". To which of the two voices did Abra-

ham listen? O, children, to the second one! He could not heed the first voice because it was that of the tempter. But the second one was the voice of God. To it Abraham had thus far hearkened, and he would not let it go unheeded now. A devout and pious man listens to God's voice. Abraham therefore said to himself, "I shall depend upon my God. He is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Salvation. He was with me on my way to Canaan, He will show me the way now, go with me and tell me what to do. And if my God be with me, who shall be against me?"

And now no time was to be lost. It was necessary to act quickly. So Abraham called his chief servant, Eliezer, and said to him, "Make haste and call all the servants together that have grown up in my house and that are strong and hardy; give each one a sword to carry at his side, and put a spear into each one's hand, and choose the swiftest camels, for we have before us a stiff chase of several days". Eliezer did as he had been ordered. Soon 318 strong and well armed men were seated on their camels, ready for the drive. Several neighbors who had heard of the matter and who had formed a league with Abraham, joined him with their servants. Abraham rode to the front of the host and told the men what it all meant. Then he placed himself at the head of the whole company of men, and away they rode. These herdsmen knew how to ride, having been used to sitting in the saddle from the time of their youth. And how the camels could run! They very likely belonged to the smaller kind that are called dromedaries. They can run for several days and nights with but few interruptions, so that they make about four times as much headway as the best and swiftest horses. Abraham needed such swift animals, since Chedorlaomer and his men had several days the start of him. They rode through the whole of Palestine in a northern direction. Just at the border of the land, near Dan (map!) they finally overtook the hostile army. Abraham sent several

servants ahead as spies. These came back and said, "They are all sleeping (for it was night) and are thinking of no enemy". That was good news, for in bright daylight and in battle order the Elamites could have made short work of Abraham and his few hundred servants. Abraham therefore divided his men into three groups that very night, and had them surround the enemy's camp on three sides. Then he gave the sign, perhaps by means of a shrill sounding whistle, and his men, shielded by the darkness of the night, fell upon the enemy's camp with terrible yells. The soldiers of Chedor-laomer were so startled that many of them were killed before they had seized their weapons; the others fled, for they imagined that they had been attacked by an overwhelming force. Abraham's men pursued them some distance in the direction of Damascus. The prisoners had been left behind in the camp, together with all the treasures that the Elamites had robbed. Among them were the people of Sodom and Lot, with all his goods. What a meeting that must have been for Abraham and Lot! For how many things Lot had to ask his uncle's pardon!

And was it not indeed a hero's task that Abraham had thus performed? In the face of it, who shall say that the devout are cowards and venture nothing in the interest of others? Abraham risked his own life and that of his servants to set free his ungrateful nephew Lot and to rescue the wicked people of Sodom from their perilous condition. And why did he perform this heroic deed? Because he loved his nephew Lot in spite of his ungratefulness, and because he trusted that God would help him. True love does not seek its own and is not easily provoked. Had Abraham allowed himself to become embittered by the unseemly behavior of Lot, he would have staid at home. And the right kind of trust in God can venture anything when it is a question of saving one's neighbor; it lends courage and confidence.

One who is really pious does not take all the credit to himself either when he has been successful in some great undertaking. Therefore, when Abraham, on his way home, came by the city of Jerusalem, and king Melchizedek brought forth to him bread and wine that he might refresh himself, it was quite in accord with his wishes that the king did not only praise him, but also God, for the great victory. For Melchizedek said to him, "Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand". Nor does the pious man help his neighbor in times of peril for the sake of enriching himself thereby. Look at Abraham. The king of Sodom, who after the battle in the Siddim valley had probably fled, came to meet Abraham on his return, thanked him most heartily for rescuing his people and all his property, and said to him, "Give me back my people, the goods you may take for yourself as a reward for your work of rescue". But Abraham replied, "I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from thee a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich: save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, let them take their portion". He wanted no other reward than that his God should be satisfied with him. To win money and other worldly goods, he had not risked his own life, nor that of his servants.

What a noble type of man Abraham was! Pious, devout, unselfish, courageous, full of trust in God and truly grateful! We, children, should and may become like him. We are not only to learn the fifth commandment, but also to live in accordance with it. You know how Dr. Martin Luther explains the fifth commandment. "We should so fear and love God as not to do our neighbor any bodily harm or injury,

but help and befriend him in every bodily need." To be sure, you can not come to the rescue of your neighbor the way Abraham did, nor is this necessary. But are there not many things that you can do and leave undone to help your neighbor in time of need, or when his life is endangered? May you not be quiet when he is sick and loud noises annoy him? May you not get in wood for him? May you not take a pretty flower to his bedside? What will you do when you see a little child out in the street where there are so many teams and so many autos? Certainly, you will run and lead it away, so that it may not be run over. A boy of twelve years saw that a big rock had broken away from the hillside and rolled down onto the rail-road track, so that a train could not run across it, but would be thrown into the depth below. How the boy was scared! He knew that a train was due to pass there in half an hour. He thought of how the train would be derailed and run into the abyss. He thought of the poor people that would lose their lives or be wounded in such an accident. How could he save them? He prayed to God, saying, "God, give me strength!" And he ran as fast as he could, in order to reach the next station before the train would leave there. It was hot and the distance was none too short. Several times he felt as if he should fall down exhausted; but he thought of the accident that might destroy so many lives, and again he prayed, "God, help me!" Thus he kept on running. When he finally reached the station, he was just able yet to deliver his message before he broke down. He had saved the people's life, he was a hero. Children, if God gives you a chance to rescue anyone from danger, then have pity, be courageous, and lend a hand. Let the world know that people who are pious may also be brave and venture something to help others.

29. What Pleased God Best in Abraham.

Children, those of you who paid close attention to what I told you about Abraham on the last three Sundays must have

learned to love him. Or were you not pleased to hear how he obeyed God's command and left his home? Was it not worthy of your hearty approval that he afterwards showed himself so peaceable and rather yielded his good right than to live in strife and contention? And did it not fill your hearts with joy to see how he had pity upon Lot and the people of Sodom, how for their sake he risked his life and wrested them from the hands of their enemies, how this heroic act did not make him vain in the least, and how he took no reward for his services, but gave all the credit for his success to God alone? We could go a long way before we should again find a man like Abraham, so obedient to God, so peaceable toward his fellow-men, so unselfish, so filled with pity, so brave and courageous. Both God and men had to be well pleased with him. That he found favor with men, was plainly shown when king Melchizedek went out to meet him as he returned from the battle with Chedorlaomer, and, full of gratitude and respect, refreshed him with bread and wine and gave him his blessing. That God looked upon him with favor, may be seen from the fact that He crowned his efforts to release Lot with such complete success. And yet, children, there was something in the life of Abraham which pleased God more than all that has been mentioned. Certainly, He was pleased to see Abraham so obedient, so peaceable, so unselfish, so compassionate, so brave and full of courage. But there was one thing in Abraham that He liked infinitely more than all these fine traits of character. Indeed, this one thing is so great in God's sight, that everything else in Abraham would not have pleased Him without it. What may this one thing be that God regards more highly than all else? We shall hear today **what pleased God best in Abraham.**

After Abraham had returned from the battle with Chedorlaomer and was again leading a quiet life, he came to have all kinds of troublesome thoughts. Some way, his heart could not be real glad over what he had done for Lot and

the people of Sodom. His neighbors to the right and to the left now honored him as a king, while in the opinion of his servants he was a true hero, to whom they looked up with the greatest admiration. But he himself felt rather uneasy. His reason told him, "Abraham, you have acted unwisely. It speaks well for your heart that you felt pity for Lot and the people of Sodom, and risked your life on their account; but you really did not stop to think seriously of what you were doing. Is it likely that Chedorlaomer, the strong and mighty king, will take his defeat calmly? No, he will gather a new army, much greater than the first one, and he will come and take revenge on you for having wrested from him all that rich booty. And what will you do when he returns? At that time, you succeeded by falling upon his men under cover of darkness, and making them believe that they were being attacked by a superior force. But what will happen when you shall have to meet him in an open battle? With your few hundred servants you will be whipped before you know it". To be sure, Abraham should have turned down such thoughts. He should have said, "My God helped me once, and He will help me a second time. The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Savior". And it stands to reason that he did say something of the kind to himself. However, those troublesome thoughts always came back again and each time his heart grew more restless and his fear increased.

But one night when Abraham's troubled mind was keeping him awake, as it no doubt had done many times before, and when he was imagining what would happen if Chedorlaomer should actually return with a new army, God showed His concern for his worried servant. He closed his eyes to things earthly, and opened them to the heavenly world. Plainly Abraham heard God say to him, "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward". God well knew with what kind of thoughts Abraham's mind was bur-

dened; He knew that his heart was moved with fear in view of what the angry Chedorlaomer might do to avenge himself: so for this very reason He said to him, "Fear not, I am thy shield". As in ancient times the soldier used the shield to ward off the arrows of the enemy, so God meant to be a strong shield to Abraham, placing Himself between Abraham and Chedorlaomer and all other enemies and protecting him, that he might be safe from all those who intended to do him harm. What could have been more comforting to Abraham than such an assurance? For if the Almighty Himself was going to protect him, he had nothing to fear. And since Abraham had also, at certain moments, said to himself, "What reward have I now for risking my very life? My whole reward consists in this, that the thought of Chedorlaomer will not allow me to rest easy a single night". God also said to Abraham, "I am thy exceeding great reward", that is, "I myself will be with thee and will reward thee for rescuing Lot and the Sodomites"; and when God rewards anyone, He rewards him abundantly.

That surely was sufficient to scatter all of Abraham's fears and cares. His heart became glad once more and filled with confidence. Moreover, since God had taken away his great care concerning Chedorlaomer, Abraham took courage to tell God of another great care which had burdened his heart even more grievously. It was the care as to whether God would yet give him a son, or whether he was to die childless. When Abraham left Haran in Mesopotamia, God gave him the promise, not only that He would lead him into a land which was to be his own, but also that in this land He would bless him and give him a son, thus starting him on the way to becoming a great nation. And behold, for ten years Abraham had now been living in Canaan, without seeing the fulfillment of that promise. God had given children to Abraham's servants, so that their number was constantly on the increase; his chief servant Eliezer had not been denied the joy of hav-

ing children; his nephew Lot also had two daughters; only Abraham and Sarah had remained childless. What good was it going to do Abraham, that, by the blessing of God, he had grown so rich in property? He could not even be sure as to who would inherit his riches after his death. Oh, how gladly he would have given up a good share of his cattle, if God had only presented him with a son! But it seemed as if God had forgotten this, the most important part of His promise. And if this were really the case, what then? Then God would not be faithful and true, not having kept His word.

This was the great care which for a long time had rested heavily upon his heart. And since God had been so kind as to relieve him of his care concerning Chedorlaomer, Abraham took heart to tell Him also of this greater care. Said he to God, "Thou speakest of reward, as if I did not already have all that I need. Thou hast indeed kept Thy promise and made me rich above measure. I really would not be able to say what else I might wish for myself in the way of property. But one thing I lack. Thou hast not yet given me a son. This part of Thy promise is still unfulfilled. If I were to die today, I would have no child of my own to close my eyelids and to become my heir. All my property would be left to Eliezer; for he has children, only to me Thou hast given none".

Abraham had thus unburdened his heart. It made him feel quite relieved. He had at least told God his trouble. But how did God receive his plaintive words? What reply did He make to them? He said to Abraham, "Arise from thy bed, and come out of thy tent, and look up to the sky". Abraham did as God had bidden him. He came forth from his tent and looked at the sky overhead. O what a beautiful, star-lit night it was! Star stood beside star; and the longer he gazed at them, the more brightly they glistened and shone for him. If he had started to count them, he would have been compelled to give it up as a hopeless task; for there

were so many that no one could count them. And as Abraham was thus gazing upward, God said to him, "Canst thou number these stars? So shall thy offspring be". In our picture the artist has fixed the moment when God pointed to heaven and said to Abraham, "Behold the stars; canst thou number them? So countless shall thy offspring be!" We can see how Abraham is filled with wonder as he looks up to the numberless stars and hears the promise of God. He had reason to feel astonished; for God had promised him far more than he had dared to ask of Him. Not only was he to have a son, but through this son he was to become the father of a nation so numerous as to defy any attempt at counting those that belong to it.

Children, it would not be surprising if Abraham had at first shaken his head and remarked, "No, this can not be, this is too much! I am 86 and Sarah 76 years old, yet I am not only to have a son, but to become the father of a countless people. I would indeed like to believe it, but it is too great a thing to be believed". But no, Abraham said nothing of the kind. That would have been doubting God's word, and he would have been an unbeliever. On the contrary, we read, "But Abraham believed in the Lord". The promise seemed great to him, so great that if anyone of his fellowmen had told it to him, he would have turned away from him, as from one trying to mock him. However, he knew that God does not make a mockery of any man, least of one who stands before Him with a heavy heart. He understood God too well for that. Instead of believing God capable of doing such a thing, Abraham thought of how wonderfully and graciously God had thus far led him. At last he talked to himself somewhat like this: "To be sure, it is a great thing that God has promised me; but is He not the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth? Did He not, once upon a time, bring forth all these stars, yea, the whole world? Why, therefore, should it not be possible for Him to give me a son in my old

age, and through him to make me a great nation? Of course, as yet I can see nothing of it; but I have His word, and is that not enough? I did not see the land of Canaan when I left Haran in Mesopotamia, I did not even know what land God meant to give me, yet I believed that He would give it to me and also lead me into it. How faithfully He kept His word! Thus will I believe in Him now also. The word of the Lord is sure; God will keep what He has promised". While thus speaking to himself, Abraham by faith turned down all thoughts of doubt. The eyes of men did not see this faith of Abraham, because faith has its seat in the heart and is not visible to human eyes. But God saw how Abraham believed His promise, how in his heart he believed it to be true and firmly relied upon it. And God heartily rejoiced in Abraham's faith. Was it not faith that He all along had wanted to kindle in Abraham's heart, unreserved, perfect faith, so that he should no longer hearken to what his reason told him, but only to what God told him, however great and wonderful it might be? For this very reason he had led him out of his country and out of his father's house and so abundantly blessed him in these ten years, that in this way he might learn the more firmly to believe, the less to cling to things visible, the more to depend only upon things invisible. For is not faith the assurance of things hoped for, the foundation of things not seen? And now He, in the case of Abraham, had reached this goal. Abraham believed Him upon His word. When the teacher has reached his goal with his scholars, then he is glad; in a similar way God was glad when He had trained Abraham's faith to such a stage of perfection. I would not deem it strange if He had said to the angels in heaven, "Look at my servant Abraham! With him I have done what I have not found it possible to do with man since the time of Noah, since the building of the tower of Babel; I have succeeded in leading him to have faith in my word. Look at Abraham down there at Hebron in the land of

Canaan; with him I intend to begin a new era on earth, a time of blessing and salvation for mankind". Yea, God added, "This faith I will count to him for righteousness. That is, since Abraham so firmly relies upon me and my word, I will no longer regard his sins, of which he still is not altogether free; I will look upon him as one who is righteous; he is to stand before me as being holy; my good will shall rest upon him without reserve; I will be his Father, and he shall be my son".

Why, then, was God so well pleased with Abraham? Why did He declare him to be righteous and holy before Him? Because he believed in Him with all his heart and firmly depended upon His word. Are you beginning to see now, children, what pleased God most in Abraham? **It was his faith.** Without faith it is impossible to please God; for the eyes of God look upon faith. That Abraham was obedient, peaceable, unselfish, brave and courageous, also pleased Him. His eyes looked upon these good qualities of His servant with pleasure. But that which they sought in Abraham above everything else, and without which everything else in him would not really have found favor in His sight, that was his faith. You will notice, children, that everything depends upon faith, upon perfect trust in the word of God.

But if you should think, children, that God at once fulfilled His promise to Abraham and gave him a son, you would be mistaken. No, God let him wait yet a long, long while. Five and even ten years passed by once more, and still Abraham had no son. Why did God let him wait so long? He wanted to see whether Abraham's faith was genuine and could bear waiting. He wanted to see whether Abraham would cling to His word and trust Him to fulfill it, if he and his wife grew older and older and it seemed as utter folly for them any longer to expect children. For nowhere in the world did it happen, even at that remote time, that children were born to people 90 and 100 years of age. It was hard for

Abraham to wait so long, and sometimes he may have been at the point of giving up hope. Sarah had really done this. She no longer believed that God would make His promise come true. Abraham also wavered many a time, until at last there was no longer any real joyous, confident hoping and believing. His faith more and more resembled a lamp whose light threatens to go out. At such times, the light still burns, but it is only an unsteady flickering, and soon it is out entirely. In order that this may not happen, mother pours fresh oil into the lamp. So, in order that the light of Abraham's faith might not die altogether, God appeared to him again when he was 99 years old, and said to him, "I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. Being almighty, I can even now give thee a son and make thee father of many nations. Only walk in such a way as if thou hadst Me before thee constantly, and be perfect. Behold, I will make my covenant with thee, that is, I will give thee the most solemn promise that thou shalt become the father of many people, and that Sarah will bear thee a son, whom thou shalt call Isaac". When Abraham heard these words, he was glad again, the light of his faith once more burned brightly; for he now had another sure word upon which to depend. God also rejoiced anew in Abraham; for it is His nature for all times not to like anything in man better than that he believes in Him and His word.

That is why God wanted to lead Sarah back to faith also. He did it in this way: One day when it was very hot and Abraham was seated outside of his tent in the shade of a large tree, God appeared to him with two angels in human form. Abraham saw them coming toward his tent. He did not yet know that it was God and two of His angels. But since they looked as if they had already walked a long way, and because it was so very hot, he wanted to invite them to be his guests until the worst of the heat should have ceased. For Abraham was a hospitable man and always glad to wel-

come anyone as guest in his home. So he arose, went to meet them, bowed down before them to the earth, and said to them, "My Lord, if I have found favor in Thy sight, then pass not by the house of Thy servant. Sit down here under the tree where it is shady. I will have my servant bring in some water and wash the hot dust from your feet, that you may feel fresh again. I myself will see to it that you may have something to eat. Then, after you have refreshed yourselves, you may continue on you way". The three men said, "Go and do so". Then they sat down under the tree. But Abraham ran into the women's tent and said to Sarah, "We have received some guests. Go quickly, take three measures of fine meal, knead it, and bake cakes upon the hearth". He himself ran out to the herds, brought a calf tender and good, and gave it to his servant, who dressed it and prepared it for the table. When the cake was done and the meat fried, Abraham took butter and milk, and of the calf, and placed it before his guests, who freely ate of it. When they were through eating, the Lord said to Abraham—and by what He said Abraham knew that it was no one else but God Himself—, "In about a year, I will come again, when Sarah shall have a son". God knew that Sarah was secretly standing behind the door of her tent and listening. For this very reason He talked as He did; Sarah was to hear it, since He had come to lead her back to faith. Sarah, however, did not believe the words of the Lord, but laughed instead, as if what God said to Abraham was something silly and altogether impossible. That was not nice of Sarah, she should have known better. Therefore, God turned about and looked in the direction of the door back of which Sarah stood, and said, "Wherefore did Sarah laugh? Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" At first Sarah did not want to admit that she had laughed; but she soon noticed that it would do her no good to deny it, and she began to feel somewhat ashamed of herself, and again to believe that God is almighty, and that in spite of her old

age she might become the mother of a son. So they both believed God and His word, Abraham and Sarah, though Abraham was especially sure of his ground. And that Abraham believed God and His word so firmly, with all his heart, that is what pleased God most in him. For the eyes of God look upon faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God.

So, children, if you wish to please God, then with you likewise all depends upon faith. Put your faith, your full trust, in God. Rest assured that He is almighty and gracious and that He can and will do for you all that furthers your welfare, according to the promises of the Holy Scriptures. The word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth. I will show you by means of a story what faith is, and how small children may have faith. A house was on fire. The flames were already finding their way through the roof. We stood there watching the fire in silence. It was too late to save anything. Nobody dared go into the house. Just then we saw, at the open window above, a boy who had not escaped from the building in time. The fire had come so suddenly that the father had been able only to save the two smallest children. And now the boy at the open window upstairs was calling in tones that betrayed his great fright. "Father, father!" In less than a second the father stood right under the window at which his boy was stationed and called to him, "Swing out of the window and let go with your hands; I am standing here and will catch you". "Father, I am afraid, I do not see you", cried the boy. We all called to him. Back of him the flames were already leaping toward the window, and the boy's hands were being scorched. Once more the father begged the boy, "Do not be afraid; I am here; let yourself drop, my child!" Then the boy let loose, and the very next moment he lay in the arms of his father.— Children, that's what it means to have faith. Just as that boy did not see his father and yet believed that he stood below

and would receive him in his arms, so, children, you must believe in God. We can not see Him either, but through His word He calls to us: "I am here; my arms are open; I will save you from every peril, especially from the peril of sin". This we are to believe, so upon it let us depend wholly and completely,—then, children, then we have faith and please God. Then He also pardons us from all sin and says to us, "You are righteous and holy in my sight; I will be your Father and you shall be my children". Upon what, then, does everything depend? Upon faith, upon faith alone!

Lord Jesus, who this precious light
Within my heart hast gendered,
O let my faith, that inner sight,
Be strong and brighter rendered.
What here Thou hast begun in me
Wilt Thou increase, till there I see
Of faith the consummation.

30. How Abraham Spoke With God as a Friend Speaks With a Friend.

That Abraham from his very heart believed God and His word, was what pleased God best in him. In view of Abraham's sincere faith, God forgave him all his sins and became his Friend and Father. Abraham noticed this, too, especially at the time when God, with two angels, paid him a friendly visit and accepted the invitation to eat at his table. How could God have drawn nearer to him and shown him more plainly that He loved him? Only think, children, He, the almighty God, who made heaven and earth and who is purer than the sun, entered Abraham's home and sat at meat with him. No wonder that Abraham now also took heart to speak with God as a friend speaks with a friend. Our Bible story for today tells us about this, and may I relate to

you: **How Abraham spoke with God as a friend speaks with a friend.**

When the three men had refreshed themselves with meat and drink, they arose, took up hat and staff, and wanted to continue on their journey. But Abraham did what one likes to do when a friendly visitor bids him farewell. To show his respect for those three men, he accompanied them a certain distance. Abraham did this all the more willingly because he had come to know that it was the Lord who with two angels had been visiting him. He wanted to stay with God just as long as he could. From the heights near Hebron, where Abraham had then pitched his tents (map!), one was able to look down into the valley in which the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located. To these heights the Lord ascended when he left the tents of Abraham. Soon the four men had reached the highest point. Below them lay the valley of the Jordan, with the Dead Sea, and farther down the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was a second Paradise, a veritable garden of the Lord. Yet there was no joy reflected in the eyes of the Lord as He looked at all the beauty beneath. On the contrary, it was with an expression of deep sadness that He beheld the beautiful spot of earth at His feet. For the people who lived there were exceedingly wicked. So great were their sins that they fairly cried to heaven. How, therefore, could the Lord be glad as He, together with Abraham, viewed the scene that spread out before them? He is mainly concerned about the people, whether they are good or evil; He can not behold sin without becoming grieved. He is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with Him.

I can not say how long He stood there and quietly looked down upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. All of a sudden, as the Holy Scriptures tell us, He said to Himself, "I can not disclose to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah what I intend to do with them on account of their sins. They

would not believe it any way, but would only laugh about it. But I can tell Abraham. He is a pious man and believes in me; for the sake of these cities he once risked his life, and since he will command his children and those coming after him to keep the way of the Lord, he should know how I deal with the sinner". And then He opened His mouth and said to Abraham, "The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities lying before us, is great, and their sin is very grievous. They have not improved any since the time you so wondrously rescued them from the hands of Chedorlaomer. I will go down now and see for myself whether they are as bad as the report that has come to me". God knew beforehand how He would find things in Sodom and Gomorrah; but He spoke in this way because He wanted Abraham to see that He never punishes anyone without having informed Himself perfectly concerning him. Nor did He want to content Himself with the information that He had gained at a distance. He was determined to go down and examine things at a close range. By the kind of treatment which the people of Sodom and Gomorrah gave Him and His messengers, He was going to find out how wicked they were, before He passed judgment upon them. Hardly had God finished speaking, when the two angels started away toward Sodom, that they, as messengers of God, might find out how great the sin of the Sodomites was.

Abraham, however, stood yet before the Lord. He could not yet separate himself from Him. Did he, then, still have something on his mind? Indeed! Not that he wanted anything more for himself. He had been promised the greatest blessing that he could imagine. God had told him that in about a year he would have a son and that through this son he would become the father of many nations. For what more could he have asked? No, he was desirous of obtaining favors from God for other people, even for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. He knew himself that those cities were ex-

tremely wicked, and he could tell by the look in God's eyes that a severe punishment, even total destruction, would come upon them. And when he began to reflect how many people inhabited these cities and would be destroyed with them, he was moved with a feeling of deep sympathy. He thought of all the misery, of all the fear and terror, of all the calamity that hung over the heads of these people, and it made his heart shrink in pain. He realized that God's punishment was just; for a long time he had watched the Sodomites growing worse right along instead of better. But he could not force his thoughts to turn away from the misery that was impending, and so he wanted to speak with God to find out whether there was not some way of escape from the terrible judgment, some means whereby the people might be spared.

Here, children, we see Abraham in his true character, as we have learned to know him. He can not pass coldly by when his neighbors are in danger. As he formerly could not bear to let them in the hands of Chedorlaomer without having tried to effect their rescue, so now he can not stand it to have God's judgment come upon them without having attempted to find some way of escape for them. What a warm, sympathetic heart he must have had! He did not rejoice when his enemies fell, and his heart was not glad when they stumbled. He did not say to himself, "Well, the people of Sodom have deserved it; it serves them right; God would not be a just and holy God if He did not punish them most terribly". Some of us probably would have cherished such thoughts. But Abraham's only thought was, "How will it still be possible for me to help them?" He surely would have had reason enough to think of his own bright future. For when God had told him, "A year from now Sarah shall have a son", his happiness had been supreme, and he had felt much as you do at Christmas time in view of the Christmas tree and gifts that are in store for you. At such a moment, you do not care to hear or talk of anything else. One would

think that Abraham, too, would not have cared to think or speak of anything but the great gift that was so soon to be bestowed upon him. And most certainly he did rejoice in God's wonderful promise; but as soon as the bitter need of the Sodomites is brought to his attention, he no longer thinks of his own happiness. The need of his neighbors is uppermost in his mind, and he takes time to speak of them with God. That is what one calls unselfish and merciful. Abraham did not seek his own advantage, but that of others.

And now let us hear how he pleaded with the Lord concerning the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham drew near to the Lord and said, "Wilt Thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Here let the narrative be repeated, as it is recorded in Genesis 18: 23—32. It can not be told more vividly "for the ten's sake".

O children, if we only could pray as Abraham did! How eloquent he was! People usually are not at a lack of what to say when they plead in their own behalf. Fear for their own safety makes them eloquent. How the words do flow when you try to excuse yourselves and talk yourselves out of a scrape! It is then a question as to how you may escape being punished. But Abraham, usually so quiet, grows eloquent at the thought of other people's misfortune, and earnestly pleads for them. Dr. M. Luther thinks that the tears ran down Abraham's cheeks as he stood there before God and prayed for Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham is aware of the utter wickedness of the people living in these cities, but he still has hope for them. It is his love that makes him hope that among the wicked there may still be some good and pious folks. We like to enlarge upon the sins of others, so as to make them appear worse than they really are; Abraham, in his warm love, would try to make them appear smaller than they are in reality. He looks for light spots in the midst of darkness. And notice his humility! He realizes that as compared with God he is but dust and ashes, and therefore

has no actual right to speak in His presence; but he believes in the grace and mercy of God, and so he prays in spite of his unworthiness. Nor should we overlook the boldness and the perseverance of Abraham in his prayer. From fifty he comes down to 45. to 40, to 30, to 20, to 10, as if God were a Jew with whom one may barter. What gave Abraham such courage, such boldness, such perseverance? Children, I will tell you: Abraham believed that God had become his friend, and that is why he took heart to talk to Him as a friend talks to a friend, openly, fearlessly, without any feeling of shyness. Abraham knew, "God has become my Father and has made me His son"; that is why he speaks with Him as a child speaks with its father, with all cheerfulness and confidence. He pours out his heart before God and does not stop until he has told Him everything. He prays as if he had learned the Bible verse, "Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him!", or that other one, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you!"

What stand did God take over against the bold and continuous prayer of Abraham? Did He bid him depart as a shameless beggar? Did He grow angry because he talked with Him so openly? Did He interrupt him in the midst of his pleadings and say, "There, that's enough now"? Far from it! He allowed him to speak until he had poured out his heart entirely; He granted him all his prayers; even at the very last He said, "I will not destroy the city for the ten's sake". In His heart He rejoiced because Abraham prayed so boldly and persistently, and because his heart was so full of compassion for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. As He had formerly taken pleasure in Abraham's faith, so He in this instance is pleased with his prayers. Nor could Abraham have prayed in this manner if he had not firmly believed God to be his Friend and Father.

Do you not think Abraham a pastmaster in praying for others? Surely, his example is one that should make you want to pray as he did, speaking with God as a friend speaks with a friend. And as for God, He was so friendly toward Abraham and promised to do according to his prayers, in order to let us know that He has a fatherly heart toward us, and that we also may pray to Him with all cheerfulness and confidence, as beloved children entreat their affectionate parents. You need not be afraid of Him; He is not a stern, hard-hearted man who would chase you away if you were but to open your mouth to Him. He is pleased to have you talk with Him, whether it be in the morning, in the evening, at meal-time, or in some special need; and He does not care at all whether you speak to Him in English or in German, because He understands all languages. If you really believe that God is your Father, you indeed can not do otherwise than pray to Him diligently. How can you walk along side of your father all day without saying a word to Him? In the same way, you can not be together with God if you do not want to pray to Him. He must leave you and say, "That person does not even care to open his mouth in my presence". And your prayers should be modeled after those of Abraham. Thus, you should not only pray for yourselves, but for others as well. Will you not, therefore, pray for your father and mother, for your sister and brother, that God may keep them well and happy; for your fellow-pupils when they are sick; for the poor orphan children who have lost their father and mother; for the idolatrous heathen, that they, too, may learn to know the Savior and become happy Christians? One who always thinks only of himself is not a true child of God. Such a person has not yet learned anything of Abraham.

A little girl in a large city had a brother who was from 16—17 years old. Although still so young in years, he did not like to do anything better than to swear, gamble, and drink to excess. His little sister prayed for him every mor-

ning. Once her bedroom door had remained partly open. Her brother passing by, stopped back of the door and listened; for she had just mentioned his name in prayer. While he was listening, he heard her say, "Dear God, do not let my brother be lost; forgive him his sins. I love him so, and some day I want to have him with me in heaven". That touched the heart of her brother in such a way that he opened the door entirely, stepped into the room, embraced his sister and said to her. "Your prayer shall be answered; I shall no longer be seen at the card table and I shall never again be heard swearing". And he kept his word; his sister helped him keep it, because she continued to pray for him. Thus the prayers that children offer for others are not in vain. "The fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." Abraham was a man of prayer. Follow his example by praying diligently.

31. How Sodom and Gomorrah Were Destroyed Because of Their Sin.

"I will go down and see for myself whether the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are really as bad as the report that has come to me, I will find out at close range whether they are indeed all so wicked," that is what God had said to Abraham when from the heights at Hebron He looked down upon those cities. Yes, and at once He had sent the two angels who were with Him to Sodom. They were to be His messengers and representatives. As the people would behave toward them, so would they treat the Lord Himself. By the kind of treatment they received at the hands of the people He was going to tell whether He could give them any more time for repentance, or whether it was necessary for Him immediately to close down upon them with His severe judgment. And what were the conditions that the two angels met with in Sodom and Gomorrah? O children, no worse conditions could be

imagined. The sin of those cities was in reality such that it cried to heaven. I must tell you today, **how God had to destroy Sodom and Gommorah because of their sin.**

It was toward evening when the two angels in human form arrived in the vicinity of Sodom. At that time, a city was generally surrounded by a high and solid wall, in order to be the better protected against any enemy that might want to enter into it. A mighty gate led through the great wall into the city. Since the wall was very thick, in some instances six and even more feet, and since the first wall was sometimes followed by a second one, there was under the gate a large and ample space. There the people of the city liked to meet, to transact business, to buy and to sell, to hold court, to talk over public affairs, or merely to have a social chat. It was especially toward evening that they enjoyed coming together under the city gate and discussing the events of the day. The older people sat upon the seats which had been placed there, the men stood together in groups, the children, large and small, ran about and sang and played. Such a scene probably greeted the two angels when on that particular evening they drew near to the city of Sodom. Nor do we need to be so very much surprised to hear that Lot was sitting among the people under the gate of the city. Since the time when Chedorlaomer had surprised him by his sudden attack, Lot most likely had built a house inside of the city wall, where he himself lived, together with his wife and two daughters. While he did not share their sinful ways, but only regarded them with a sad heart, he did not want to keep entirely aloof from the people among whom he lived, and so he occasionally joined them in their social gatherings under the city gate. There we also find him on that particular evening.

And as he sat there among the other people of Sodom, the two angels came that way, passing through the middle of the gate that led into the city. They looked as if they

might have been walking some distance, and as if they did not quite know in what direction to turn. Lot at once arose from his seat, walked toward them, made a deep bow in polite eastern style, and said to them, "I see you are strangers in this city; do come into my house and spend the night with me; there in my house you will find water to wash the dust from your feet, and food to satisfy your hunger; in the morning, after you have rested, you may continue on your journey". That was very kind of Lot; for as yet he did not know who these men were, but believed them to be ordinary travelers. On the other hand, it was nothing unusual that he did. In the far East people were then, and in some places are now, very hospitable. But the two men acted as if they did not want to be his guests. They no doubt were desirous of finding out whether Lot was real sincere and in earnest about inviting them into his home. Therefore, they answered very decidedly, "No, we will stay in the street all night, the place here in the city gate will do very well". But Lot stood the test. He repeated his invitation and even urged them to come with him into his house. Very likely he surmised what evil thoughts the people of Sodom would have concerning these strangers. He undoubtedly knew what a dangerous thing it was to spend a night in the streets of Sodom, under the city gate, and he felt sure that they would be better protected in his home. When the angels saw how seriously Lot's invitation was meant, they consented to stay with him. So they accompanied him to his house, where his wife hurried to bake some cakes and prepare a supper for them, of which they partook most heartily. Here there was at least one, who, though he lived among the wicked, did not consent to their ways, but with true hospitality cared for strangers. But how did matters stand with all the other inhabitants of Sodom? That was what they had really come to find out.

They were to discover it soon enough, too. The people showed it by the way they behaved toward them. The two

strangers had not yet retired for the night, when there was heard out in the street the tramping of feet and the sound of voices. Louder and louder the noise grew, until the shouting rabble was heard outside of Lot's house. It was a large crowd of Sodomites who did not like it that Lot had taken the two strangers into his house, because they wanted to do something very wicked with them. So they pounded at the door of Lot's house and asked in a rough tone of voice, "Where are the men that came into your house tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may do with them as we desire". What they wanted to do with the strangers, was a very grave sin, not only in the sight of Lot and Abraham, who knew the living God, but also in the eyes of the heathen people of that time. In the eastern countries there is nothing greater and more sacred than the right of the guest to good treatment. Even the robber-like Bedouins in the Arabian desert hold it sacred. Though one were a death enemy, he was safe when he staid in the city or house as guest. It was the duty of the host to answer for the safety of the guest by his own life. And now the people of Sodom wanted to misuse these men, who had never harmed them and who had entered their city as guests. They demanded Lot basely to violate the law of fair treatment to guests, and to deliver the two men up to them for shameful abuse. Thereby the Sodomites showed most plainly that they were worse than all the heathen round about. Another thing must here be considered. Lot knew well enough what it was that the Sodomites desired to do with the strangers. It was such a shameful sin that one does not even like to mention it. This sin may have been practiced also by other heathen, but they committed it secretly, and would have hesitated to abuse guests in connection with it. But the people of Sodom did the shameful sin openly, and were not ashamed to tell Lot for what base purpose they desired to have his guests brought out to them. O children, if any one does a sin, but is ashamed of it, that is bad enough;

however, there is still hope for his improvement. On the other hand, if any one sins and is no longer ashamed of it; if any one has it in his mind to do the most revolting sin and shamelessly lets the world know it, there all hope of betterment must be abandoned. People of this type are ripe for judgment. In the case of the Sodomites a third thing is yet to be borne in mind. It was not merely a mob of street loafers that gathered there around Lot's house. Men of this stamp sometimes do a thing of which all decent citizens of a town heartily disapprove. No, here in Sodom it was different. The Bible says expressly that all the people from every quarter of the city were represented. They included old sinners with gray hair, middle-aged men and even young boys. There were present on that occasion old and young, high and low, in one wild mob. Oh, if such were the conditions, then there were no ten righteous people in the city, then things were much worse than Abraham in his kindly frame of mind had assumed when he said to God, "Spare the city if Thou findest ten righteous people in it", then indeed there were none left who could have stemmed the tide of destruction, then God simply had to intervene, and that immediately and with unrelenting severity.

In addition to what we have already heard, we must take into account the further behavior of the wild mob before Lot's house. In order to shield his guests from the lawlessness of the Sodomites, Lot went out to them, closed the door back of him, and said to the crowd, "Brethren, do not so wickedly. Remember, they are strangers here, and my guests". He was willing even to go to the farthest extreme, if only his guests were left unmolested. But it availed him nothing. Hardly had he finished speaking, when they all began to yell like mad men, "Stand back there! You are the only one among us who always wants to act differently than we. You are a stranger in our city yourself, and do you mean to judge us?" And already the foremost ones were

pressing in upon Lot, to clear the way to the door and break into the house by force, that they might drag out the men and do with them according to their evil will.

This had made it clear that they were altogether in the grip of sin. With their own eyes the angels saw their baseness, and the Sodomites also wanted to let them feel it in their bodies. That was enough. The angels, therefore, began to take matters into their own hands. With their strong arms they reached out and drew Lot into the house. But those outside were stricken with blindness, so that they could not find the door. This was the beginning of the judgment; but only the beginning. Lot was already able to see that he was not showing hospitality to ordinary human beings, but that his guests were messengers of God, angels of the Almighty. Of this he became fully assured when the men said to him, "If you have any persons in the city who belong to you, bring them out of it; for the Lord has sent us to destroy this place". Lot believed what the angels told him; he must have felt before that such a godless city could not remain unpunished any longer. So he went and spoke to the two young men that were to marry his daughters, saying, "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city". But they thought he was only trying to mock them. "What," said they, "this city is to be destroyed? It has stood so long, and it will stand longer, too."

When Lot returned to his house, morning had already dawned. The angels therefore hastened Lot and said, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters, lest you also be consumed with the city". But, children, it is hard so suddenly to leave everything that one holds dear, and to save nothing but one's life, especially when no danger is yet in sight. Lot probably walked restlessly to and fro, now picking up one thing and then another, without getting started. Meanwhile, time was moving on, and the moments were precious. So the angels at last took Lot, his wife, and his two daughters

by the hand and led them out of the city. Then the angels said to Lot, "Escape for your life; look not behind you, nor stand still in all the plain, that you may not perish with Sodom and the neighboring cities, that are equally wicked". Upon Lot's special request, the Lord promised to spare the little city of Zoar, to which Lot, therefore, hastened as fast as he could. The sun had just risen when he entered into Zoar.

Hardly had he reached this place of safety, when destruction came upon Sodom, also reaching the other godless cities in the valley, Gomorrah, Zaboiim and Admah. The Lord caused fire and brimstone to rain upon them from heaven, and to consume them. What a terrible conflagration that must have been! Such a storm had never been witnessed. There were crashes of thunder, there were flashes of lightning, and the whole sky was one mass of red. At first the inhabitants of the cities thought it was a regular storm, only one of extraordinary violence. But soon they felt that here was a mysterious, terrible power back of it. The lightning struck in various places and fires were started in different parts of the doomed cities. Nor did God only permit the lightning to strike the houses; it also set on fire large beds of asphalt which the earth in those regions contained in large number. In this way the earth itself was made to burn. The flames consumed it underneath, thus causing it to give way, so that the walls began to cave in and the houses to topple over. The people became panic-stricken. They ran in all directions, but everywhere the earth quaked and sank beneath their feet. Gases which thus far had been shut in now found an outlet through the crevices of the earth. Sulpher water came oozing out of the ground. Both the gas and the sulpher, ignited by the lightning, before long caused everything to appear as one big lake of fire. Cries and lamentations filled the air; but there was no way of escape, everything perished, men, cattle and all that had breath. The

earth sank to such a depth that it swallowed up the four cities. At last the waters of the Dead Sea rushed in and covered the whole scene, so that today there is nothing but an expanse of water where once these cities stood, with their scenes of life and activity. (Map!) Thus, children, God can punish those cities and lands whose people are so wicked; for our God is a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the destruction of any people." Even Lot's wife was overtaken by the rain of fire and brimstone, because she stood still and looked back to the treasures that she had left behind in Sodom. She was killed, and her body was covered by the deposits of salt, which are very heavy in those regions. To such an extent was she covered, that hundreds of years later people spoke of the pillar of salt into which she was changed. Only Lot and his two daughters were saved by the mercy of God.

That same morning, Abraham arose early and went up to the heights where he had stood with God the day before and prayed for the cities that lay in the plain below. He was anxious to find out whether those cities had once more been spared. Oh, how sad he was, when, looking in the direction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he saw nothing but smoke and the fumes of sulpher rise. Now he knew that God had not even found ten righteous people in Sodom. We can imagine how Abraham folded his hands and said, "Thou art not a God that has pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with Thee". He found no fault with God, but acknowledged His judgment to be righteous. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and gracious in all His works," such were his thoughts as he descended from the heights and returned to his tent. In his heart he must have said, "I will tell it to my entire house and to all my offspring that God punishes the sinner; I shall say to them, 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' ".

And what Abraham thus said in his heart, that we should also say to ourselves: God may show forbearance a very long time, in trying to save the sinner; but if the sinner will not repent and be saved, God can and does punish him most severely. Ever does the saying hold good,

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
With exactness, too, they grind,
And the judgment He postponeth
All the more severe we find."

And though God may let the sinner die amid worldly fortunes, He will not let him go unpunished after his death. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is but the prelude to the destruction of the whole world, when God will consign the wicked to the eternal fire. Then only those will be spared who believed in Him and did according to His will. Therefore, children, we should fear His wrath, and do nothing against His commandments. There is nothing more satisfying to the heart than to believe in our God and Lord, as our only Savior; and there is nothing more terrible than the eternal judgment of God which He imposes upon the obstinate sinner. Oh, that God Himself would guard us against sin and keep us steadfast in the faith even unto our end! For this let us pray. And wilt Thou, O Lord, hear our prayer, so that it may not be necessary for Thee eternally to punish a single one of us!

32. God Gives Abraham a Son, But Abraham Loves God More Than His Son.

In our previous lessons, we heard many great and praiseworthy things about Abraham. The more we heard, the better we learned to understand why people two thousand years after Abraham had died still called him the "father of believers", and why it is that even now, after the lapse of four thousand years since the death of Abraham, we, both in

church and school, so often hear and speak of his faith. For he was an expert believer, and it is above everything else his undying faith that has made him a model for all time. By faith he left his home and said in his heart, "My God will give me a new and much more beautiful place in which to live; I have His promise for it, which He will most surely keep". By faith he was able calmly to watch Lot take the best part of the new country for his share; he said to himself, "My God, who promised me this whole land, will see to it that I shall not be deprived of my due portion". By faith he risked his own life for Lot and the people of Sodom, deriving courage from the thought, "Though I have but 318 servants, God will go with me, and He is stronger than all the combined forces of the enemy". By faith, he, in compliance with God's demand, looked up to heaven and accepted as true the assurance that he, although 86 years old, would become the father of a nation as numerous as the stars of the firmament. By faith he afterwards took heart and made intercession for the people of Sodom, speaking with God as a friend with his friend. By faith in the truth that God is righteous in all His ways, however severely the sinner is punished, he submitted to the will of God when He destroyed Sodom and the surrounding cities. Faith was the root and source of all his actions. It had been especially hard for him that he was made to wait fully twenty-five years for the fulfillment of the promise that he would be given a son. The older he and his wife grew, the less it seemed possible that this promise should ever come true. Here Abraham at times wavered and doubted somewhat, but even in this instance he never lost faith entirely. As soon as God renewed His promise to him, his faith shone forth anew and again burned brightly, like a lamp when it has been refilled with oil. But the most difficult test of his faith was yet to come. Of this you will hear today, as I tell you **how God gave Abraham the promised son, and how Abraham in turn offered him to God.**

"A year from now, I certainly will return unto you, and then Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son," that is what God had said to Abraham when He, together with two angels, paid him a visit at his home. And so it came to pass. When Abraham was 100 years old, Sarah, his wife, bore unto him the promised son. What a joyful event that was! The father and the mother just could not grow tired of gazing at the little boy, who with his bright eyes, looked so inquisitively into the world. Abraham now often left his own tent and went over to the tent of Sarah, to inquire about the child, and Sarah's joy was so great that she looked several years younger than before. Never since they lived in Canaan had Abraham and Sarah been so happy, and their many man-servants and maid-servants rejoiced with them to their hearts' content. No doubt, when Abraham, with a heart so filled with joy, looked upon his son, he sometimes also raised his eyes toward heaven and said to his God, "Now I know most surely that Thou art a true and faithful God, and that Thou always keepest Thy promise, although the expectation of its fulfillment may seem as something foolish in the sight of men; since Thou hast given me the promised son in spite of my hundred years, Thou wilt also grant everything else that Thou hast promised me; Canaan will indeed be my possession, and my offspring will be as countless as the stars of heaven". As for Sarah, she may more than once have begged God's pardon for having had no faith in His promise, and for even having laughed when she stood back of the door of her tent and heard the Lord say that a year later she would be the mother of a little boy. When the boy was eight days old, his father, acting upon God's command, had him circumcised, just as you, soon after you were born, received Christian baptism, and he gave him the name which God had picked out for him even before he was born, the name Isaac. A more suitable name could not have been found; for Isaac means "child of laughter",

and joy and laughter had entered the house of Abraham when his little boy made his appearance.

The joy of the parents kept pace with the growth of their child. Soon the boy was a real help to his mother; and when his father occasionally went out to the herds, little Isaac was sure to go along. Then, if the servants reported to Abraham that 12 calves and 7 young camels had been added to his herds, Abraham's heart was made glad, and he said to himself, "Well and good; now I know for sure who will some day inherit all these cattle, as they will all belong to my dear Isaac". You have all seen the buds on the rose-bushes. As long as they remain closed; they are as a secret, and every day you run to see how they are developing and what is going to be the outgrowth of the promising buds. Parents do this very thing with their children. Indeed, children are like buds, concealing a secret. Slowly and gradually body and soul are developed, and for parents nothing is of greater interest, and in the case of good children, nothing causes them greater joy, than to be allowed to observe how the closed human bud unfolds itself, ever growing richer, ever becoming more beautiful. Such joy Abraham and Sarah experienced with their son. Isaac developed into a fine boy, who liked to have his father tell him about the living God, and who learned to love God all the more when he saw how much his father, Abraham, loved the Lord, who had led him so kindly and wonderfully throughout his life. No wonder that Abraham looked with joy and pride upon his son Isaac and guarded him as the apple of his eye. For he knew of a special secret that was wrapped up in Isaac. When he looked at him in unwatched moments, he could not help thinking that God had His special plans with Isaac, that he was going to make him a great nation, according to His promise, yea, that from him the Savior should come, who would lead all the people and nations of the earth back to God, and in whom they would be blessed beyond all measure. Viewed in this light,

Isaac ever and again appeared to Abraham as a wonder, as a tangible proof of divine love and grace.

Thus Isaac grew up to be a boy, and then a youth. He did not belong to those, who, as they advance in years, also increase in wickedness; but the more he grew in stature, the better and wiser he became, and the more his father could depend upon him. Hence, what wonder if Abraham learned to love him in such a way, that Isaac was first in his thoughts when he arose in the morning, and last when he retired at night, that Isaac was the center around which all his thoughts revolved? A pious man, however, must not go to such an extreme. Dearly as he may love his children, he must love God above all things, and must allow nothing else to rob God of the first place in his heart. He who loves his children more than God, thereby makes idols of them. That, however, is not good for the children, and parents thereby commit a grave sin. With Abraham, things had not yet gone to such an extreme, but he was in danger of loving Isaac in a sort of idolatrous way. Since Abraham himself did not notice how his love for Isaac was on the point of crowding back the love toward God in his heart, God had to put him in mind of this fact. From the time of his departure out of Mesopotamia, God had taken Abraham into His special school, and all that Abraham had learned in this school would have been in vain if he had now begun to love his son more than his God. For this reason God said to Himself, "I will tempt Abraham, I will put him to a test. I will act as if I were as cruel as one may possibly be, and demand the very hardest of him; then all the world will know whom he loves most, Me or his son Isaac". God knew well enough in advance what decision Abraham would make, but for Abraham himself it was a good thing to be put on trial. It was to be made clear to what great danger he was exposed; and the Canaanites round about, who were prone to offer their first-

born son to the gods, were to notice that Abraham also was willing to do the greatest and hardest thing for his God.

So God appeared to Abraham when Isaac was from 15 to 17 years old. It happened during the night, perhaps in a dream, or while Abraham was offering prayer. But in whatever way God may have appeared to him, Abraham at all events heard God talking to him and was firmly convinced that it was no one else. And now hear what God said to him. This is what He said: "Take Isaac, thy only son, whom thou lovest, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon a mount that I will show thee". Oh, what God thus demanded of Abraham was indeed something terrible. Every word that He spoke was as a dagger that pierced Abraham's heart, each following word being just so much sharper and so much more cruel than the one preceding it. "Take Isaac,"—he is to give up his laughter and his sunshine, his joy and his crown, the one for whom he had waited all these 25 years. "Thine only son, whom thou lovest,"—Abraham loved him more than his own life. "And go to the land of Moriah,"—a land three days' journey distant, for three days the grim pain is to have time to rend the poor father's heart. "And offer him,"—such is the climax in the divine charge. Other parents must likewise give up their children when death makes its demands upon them, sometimes also the only son after he has been in the throes of death for days, so that their heart is rent by the thrusts of pain piercing it. But then it is God who takes their child. Abraham, on the other hand, is himself to take the knife, slay his son with it and then burn him on the altar. "I can not get it into my head that God should ask such a cruel thing of a man, as to slay his own son." This remark was made by Luther's wife in view of what God demanded of Abraham. And we would not feel any different about the matter. More than that, we would not only have to say that God is cruel if He had commanded Abraham to do such a thing with

Isaac, but we would also have to accuse Him of being unfaithful, since He had promised Abraham repeatedly that through Isaac he would become the father of many nations. How was this promise to be fulfilled if Isaac now was slain and burnt as an offering? Only because we know one thing, the whole story appears to us in quite a different light. We know that God here shows Himself different from what He really is, and that He does this in order to test Abraham, giving him a chance to show by a particular act that he loves Him more than his son. Abraham, for the time being, was, of course, not aware of this. He could only understand God's command in the literal sense and could think of nothing but the offering, the dying, the slaying, the burning of his son Isaac, and this is what made the command of God appear so terrible to him. Oh, the struggle through which the poor man had to pass during that night! We can neither understand nor express the agony that he must have felt. How he must have pleaded with God, saying, "O God, command what Thou wilt, only not this one thing! Let me keep Isaac, the joy of my life, the sunshine of my old age!" He may have grown so bold as to say, "Thou darest not take him from me, Thou canst not demand that I give him up, because all Thy promises are centered in him, and Thou wilt not break Thy word". And when God did not reply, he at least made this request: "If it be Thy firm will to take Isaac, O then let him fall asleep softly, only do not demand that I myself slay him". We do not know how long Abraham prayed, moaned and struggled in this manner, so that heavy drops of perspiration rolled from his brow. But one thing is sure, that in the end his love toward God and his faith in Him won the victory. When God would not take back one iota of His command and to all the pleadings of Abraham offered not a single word in reply, Abraham saw clearly that what God had requested him to do was His firm and unalterable will, and when Abraham once understood this, he became submissive and said to

God, "I can not understand why Thou shouldst ask just this of me; but if I refuse to do it, Thou wilt turn from me; I, however, can not be without Thee; Thy grace is my life; dearly as I love my son Isaac, I would rather lose him than Thee; therefore, may Thy will be done!"

Hardly had Abraham, to this extent, won out in his struggle, when he arose from his bed and made preparations for carrying God's command into effect. He did not want to wait any longer, in order that he might not be tempted to change his mind and grow disobedient to God. He awakened two reliable servants, telling them to get a beast of burden ready for the journey. He himself split some dry wood for the burnt-offering, had a supply of food packed, called his son Isaac and told him to dress for the trip to the land of Moriah. The wood, the food, and all other supplies were laid upon the beast of burden: Into his girdle Abraham stuck a knife. From the burning coals on the hearth, which at that time were never allowed to go out because people had no matches to relight them, he raked a goodly lot into a basin, which he carried in his hand and took with him, since he needed fire for the burnt-offering. Thus equipped, the four started on their way, walking beside the beast with the supplies. To Sarah Abraham did not say anything about the whole undertaking; for it would only have caused him a new struggle, while he wanted to remain firm, and therefore carefully avoided everything that might have unsettled his mind. As long as it was God's will that he should sacrifice his son, he was going to carry it into effect without waiting or wavering. Children, fix your eyes on Abraham as he starts out from home early in the morning to sacrifice his own son! His heart is ready to burst from pain, his limbs will hardly bear the burden of his body, he would rather lie down in the grave himself than slaughter and burn his own son as an offering; but he overcomes all this, he fortifies his soul and undertakes the fateful journey because God wills it. That,

children, is what it means to love God above all things, with all one's heart, with all one's mind, with all one's soul, and with all one's strength; that is what it means to have faith and render obedience. Do you boys wish to see a hero, a hero of unwavering faith and unconditional surrender to God's will? In Abraham he stands before you. As good and great as he has appeared before, here he reaches the summit of his heroism. He will rather give up his son than God, he will rather seize the knife, and, in obedience to God's command, slay his own son than not be in favor with God.

From Beersheba, where Abraham then resided, to the land of Moriah, where at present the city of Jerusalem is located (map), one travels a distance that may be covered in about 18 hours, provided one walks steadily. It is, therefore, something like a journey of three days. The way from Beersheba to Moriah, leads across the heights of Hebron and affords one many an opportunity for getting a bird's eye view of the beautiful landscape, way into the distance. But this time Abraham had no eye for his surroundings, and while Isaac at the start may have asked his father this or that question, he soon kept his silence, and refrained from talking to his father, when he noticed that his thoughts were busy with something else, with something manifestly very serious. In the three days of that memorable journey, Abraham once more experienced that inner struggle between his natural affection for Isaac and his love for God, and his faith in the truthfulness of God's promises also had to fight valiently to maintain itself. His outward quietness and almost complete silence stood in strong contrast to his inner wrestlings. In the hidden recesses of his soul he cried aloud to his God, "So long did I have to wait for my son, and now I am asked to give him up again. I will offer Him to Thee because Thou demandest it. But didst Thou not promise me that Thou wouldst make me a great nation, as numerous even as the stars in the sky? How is this going to happen if I am de-

prived of my only son? How shall I rhyme these two things: the death of my son and becoming a great nation through him? O Lord, Thy way is dark, I can not understand it. And with my own hand I am tomorrow or the day after tomorrow to seize the knife and thrust it into the breast of my son. What shall I say to Sarah when I return to her without the lad? She will be stricken with mortal grief, and I shall lose her. O God, it is too hard: help me, or I will not be able to go any farther!" And God did help His faithful servant Abraham. For suddenly a wonderful thought sprang up in his mind, with which, no doubt, God Himself had inspired him. Abraham said to himself, "Is not God able to recall my son from death to life? Would that be more difficult than to give a son to people 100 years old? Having done the one thing, should he, being the Almighty, not also have power to do the other? Did He not at one time say to me Himself that with Him all things were possible? Yes, He can do all things, He can also recall my son from the dead. I do not know how nor when, but He will know, and I trust that He will also do it". In this way Abraham's faith had conquered, his soul was securely anchored, and a sense of rest came over him. And when his soul again became cast down and grew restless, he would say to it, "Why art thou so cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God". That was faith triumphant. As long as the earth stood, it had never occurred that a dead person came to life again; but Abraham rises to the height of a faith that ascribes to God the power to raise a dead person if it is necessary to the fulfillment of His promise.

Meanwhile, the first two days of the journey had passed away; on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes (he could do that again now, since his soul had become quiet, and he clearly saw his way), and he noticed that they were already

in the land of Moriah; he also discovered, at a certain distance, the mountain upon which he was to offer his son. He did not know that it was the same mountain upon which, at a later time, the temple was built where so many offerings were made to God. Nor was he aware of the fact that right near by was that other mount upon which God later offered up His own Son for the blessing and the salvation of all mankind. God, however, knew all this in advance, and so arranged it that these events occurred on the same hallowed ground. Having come to the foot of the mountain, Abraham said to his two servants, "Stay here with the animal; I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and come again unto you." Notice how Abraham feels assured that God will give him back his son. For he does not say, **"I"**, but **"we** will come back again". Then Abraham took the wood for the burnt-offering and laid it upon his son Isaac; who had to bear it, even as Jesus later bore the cross, upon which He was to be offered, to the top of Mount Calvary. Abraham himself carried the basin with the glowing coals in the one hand, so that he might be able to light the fire for the offering at the top of the mount. With the other hand he clasped the sharp knife, in order to have all the things that he needed for the work that his God had commanded him to do. Then the two, father and son, walked up the mountain together. On the way Isaac said to his father, "My father!" He answered. "Here am I, my son." And Isaac said further, "Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Isaac's question was altogether in place; an animal seemed to be needed for the offering that they were about to make. Should his father, in his deep devotion, have forgotten all about the lamb for the sacrifice? He did not as yet have any idea that he himself was to be the offering. He did not know, either, how his question cut into the very center of his father's heart. But Abraham composed himself and quietly said, "My son, God will Himself

provide a lamb for the offering". Once more it was the faith of Abraham that spoke thus; he trusted God to find some way out of the difficulty. And so the two kept on going together. Neither the one nor the other said a word; only the sound of their footsteps interrupted the deep silence. The son did not want to disturb the father, and the father had enough to do with the conflicting thoughts that filled his heart. For the nearer they drew to the place of the sacrifice, the hotter his inner conflict once more became.

But this time again Abraham emerged from the fray victorious, and, as before, said to his soul, "Why art thou so cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God". Having arrived at the place of the offering, Abraham decidedly and quietly proceeded to carry the divine command into effect. He gathered stones and built an altar of them, after which he laid the wood in order. Then, I imagine, he put his arm around Isaac's shoulder, or even took him on his lap like a child and told him what God had ordered him to do, and that one must love God above all things and in the same way render obedience to Him. The son understood the father. Now he knew why he had not taken with him a lamb for the offering. He did not see why this all had to be; but he knew that his father loved him as ardently as a son may be loved by his father, and that one must obey God without questioning His word, and so he offered no resistance, but gave himself up quietly and patiently, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter. And now the great moment arrived when Abraham's love and faith did their utmost. He took his son and bound his hands and feet, just as they used to bind a lamb for the sacrifice. Then he laid him upon the altar, on top of the wood, stretched forth his hand and grasped the knife to slay his son. His soul was all obedience to God.

Just at this moment, children, when Abraham was about to slay his son, the angel of the Lord called from heaven with a loud voice, "Abraham, Abraham!" He answered, "Here am I". The angel continued, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me". God waited no longer in revealing His heart, since it was not His intention to have Isaac killed, but only to test Abraham; and no sooner did He intervene, because then it would not have become known whether Abraham did not after all in the very last moment change his mind about offering up Isaac. But now, when Abraham had as much as slain his son, now when he had already passed the hardest part of the test, God stayed the father's hand, that the fatal thrust might not be made. What God wanted to attain had been attained. Abraham had proved that he loved God more than his son, that he feared nothing more than the loss of divine favor, that he believed God able to have Isaac slain and yet to fulfill His promise, according to which Abraham was, through Isaac, to become the father of many nations. Now God could also tell him that with all that had taken place he only wanted to put him to a test, and that he had stood the test to perfection.

O how great was the blessedness of Abraham (James 1: 12)! Shall I go on now to tell you how he hastened to take his son down from the altar and loosen the bands with which he had bound him, how father and son embraced each other for joy, and how they knelt down to thank God that He would let them stay together, happy in each other's company? But was Abraham to have built the altar in vain? No, since now there was all the more reason for making a joyous burnt- and thank-offering. And it was to be made at once. For when Abraham lifted up his eyes, he saw in the background a ram which before had entirely escaped his notice. This ram was caught in the thicket by his horns and could not tear

loose. Quickly Abraham went to get this ram, and he offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. Then he once more heard a voice out of heaven, saying, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy offspring as the stars of the heaven and as the sand upon the sea shores, and thy offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed". You see, that was how God rewarded Abraham for his faith and his obedience. Because Abraham loved God more than his son, because he trusted God for finding a way to make him, through Isaac, a great nation, even though Isaac were slain, therefore God now renews His promise to Abraham. Yes, all that He has promised Abraham will be fulfilled, and more will be added; from Isaac the Savior is to be descended, who will prove Himself to be the fountain of salvation and blessing to all the nations of the earth.

How happy Abraham was when he heard this; how he rejoiced to know that he had found favor with God, that the Lord was satisfied with him! Without any feeling of uneasiness, he, accompanied by Isaac, could now return to Sarah and tell her everything. The darkest day of his life had become the brightest. Trying as the test had been, he passed it with credit. For the rest of his life he was sure of this: I am in favor with God; twice He has told me so, and even solemnly sworn to it.

Children, it is not likely that God will ever ask of you anything so hard as the trial through which He required Abraham to pass. But whatever He may want you to do, be sure to do it; never say, "It is too hard". Even though what He demands of you may seem like folly in your sight. do not hesitate to comply with His request. He will make everything come to a happy end. Trust Him for that! What

God does is done well, always and everywhere. Obedience to God and a firm trust in Him have ever been the way to true happiness; for blessed, yea, blessed is the man that endureth temptation!

33. How God Provided A Wife For Isaac.

When Abraham was ready to offer up his son Isaac, he stood very high in the sight of the Lord. God had brought Abraham to where He wanted to bring him. He had trained him to be a man of faith whose equal is not to be found in the whole Old Testament. For this very reason he is of such great importance to us here in Sunday school, that we busy ourselves with him Sunday after Sunday, in order to learn of him. After he had shown his willingness to give up Isaac and offer him to God for a burnt-offering, Abraham lived about 60 years longer, until he was 175 years old. But the Bible does not tell us much more about him; for it is chiefly interested in the kind of heart that people have toward God, and it has already told us this with regard to Abraham. So the Bible does not need to say much more concerning the remainder of his life. It does, however, relate two stories from which we are to learn that Abraham also was a man of faith during the last 60 years of his earthly career. He showed his faith when about 20 years after the offering of Isaac his faithful wife Sarah died. Then the question was, where to bury her. Abraham went to the city of Hebron, near which he at that time had pitched his tents(map!), and in the presence of many witnesses bought the cave of Mach-pelah; for it was not customary then to bury the dead in the earth, but people preferred to place the bodies of their dead in a cave, which was then kept tightly closed. Abraham had selected the cave of Mach-pelah because it was unusually large. It contained two divisions and offered room for many, many bodies. By buying this roomy cave, Abraham showed his

faith. In the eyes of the world Abraham until now did not own a single foot of land in Canaan, but as a wanderer he still moved from one place to another. Nevertheless he firmly trusted that God would some day give him and his offspring the whole land. He believed this so firmly that he already bought a place of burial, not only for his wife Sarah and himself, but also for those of his family who would live after him. Not in the least did he doubt God's word and promise. We see from this anew that his faith was a firm foundation of things hoped for, a blessed assurance of things not seen. —And still another story is told us about aged Abraham which shows plainly that up to the very end of his life he held fast to his faith and piety. This is a very lovely story, and I mean to relate it to you more fully. You are to be told **how aged Abraham looked to Isaac's welfare and had God provide a wife for him.**

When Sarah was dead and her body had been placed away, Abraham thought in his heart that he himself was also very old and that his last hour might likewise come at any time. But there was one care of which he wanted to relieve himself before he passed away. It concerned the welfare of Isaac. Where should he find a wife for Isaac, so that he would not only be provided with a life companion, but with a woman suitable for him, with one, who, like himself, believed in the living God and trusted in Him? Abraham had seen enough of the world to know what mischief a godless woman may cause in the home. He would not have shown himself as a man of faith and piety, if he had not cared what kind of a woman would become his son's wife. Besides, in the far east it was customary that the father chose a wife for his son. When Abraham began to think seriously on this subject, he saw one thing very clearly from the very start: Isaac's wife was not to be one of the daughters of the Canaanites. Not that among them none were rich and beautiful enough. There was indeed no lack of such, and many a

king's daughter would have been glad if Abraham had picked her out for his son, because Abraham was as rich as many a prince or king in his day, and his name was respected throughout the land. But Abraham did not want Isaac's wife to be one of the daughters of the Canaanites, because they were all heathen who did not know the living God, and because they had all, to some extent, become infected with the sin of the Sodomites. O how painful it would have been for Abraham to see, in the place of his Sarah, a bold, impudent heathen woman of the Canaanites acting as mistress of the house! And in this case, how hard it would have been for Isaac to cling to his faith in the living God and also to bring up his children in that faith! But where was Abraham to find for his son a wife who with him would bend her knees to the true and living God? In pondering this question, Abraham thought of his former home in Mesopotamia, from which he had gone out so many years ago. He had just shortly before Sarah's death heard from his relatives in Mesopotamia, and learned how they were getting along. To be sure, they also had for some time worshiped the moon as the highest god, but they still knew something of the living God and they led a clean life when one compared their life with that of the Canaanites. Abraham therefore decided to send somebody to Mesopotamia and have him bring Isaac a wife from his kinsmen there. You will notice, children, what an important matter the marriage of his son was to Abraham, and what his chief care was, namely, that the woman who became Isaac's wife shou'd be pure and goo l. Whether she should also be rich and beautiful, was of far less importance to him. He knew why; he knew that one may be rich and handsome, and at the same time wicked and godless; he knew, for he had often experienced it in himself, that the eyes of God look upon faith; and what God looks upon he also would look upon as being a matter of the very first importance.

Whenever Abraham had come to a conclusion, he was always quick to act upon it. So in the present instance he immediately called his most trustworthy servant—it most likely was good old Eliezer—and said to him, "Put your hand under my thigh—that was customary then if any one took an oath—and swear by the Lord God of heaven and earth, that you will not lend your hand in taking for my son a wife from among the daughters of the Canaanites. But get ready at once and go to Haran in Mesopotamia, where my kinsfolk live, and get my son a wife from there. You know the way as far as Damascus, and from there you will only have to stay on the great mercantile highway, which will take you to Haran. I know you are pretty old to undertake such a long journey, but for this important matter I can only use my most trusty servant. Nor will I be able to lay down my head and die in peace until I know that this weighty affair is taken care of". Eliezer answered, "As for the journey, I am ready to start upon it at once, since you believe it to be of such great importance. But what if I find among your kinsfolk a wife for Isaac, and she will not come with me to this land, shall I then take Isaac back to Haran?" Abraham answered, "Beware! I am confident that God, who has so faithfully led me all the days of my life, will lend His blessing to your venture; He will let you find a wife for Isaac, and will also make her willing to come with you here to the land of Canaan; but if the woman should not be willing to follow you, then swear unto me that after my death you will not at any price take for Isaac a woman of the Canaanites, nor have him return to Mesopotamia". Then the servant put his hand under Abraham's thigh and swore to him concerning this matter.

Without waiting any longer, Eliezer made preparations for the journey. He took ten of the best camels and many goodly things of his master's with him. He also selected for the trip several of the most reliable servants. He wanted to make a favorable impression when he arrived in Haran,

and give the relatives of his master an idea of Abraham's riches. At the same time it was customary in the far East, not only to make presents to the bride, but also to leave gifts for the parents and for the bride's sisters and brothers. And if he found a woman, she would want to take with her some of her personal belongings and some of her most favored maid-servants. Thus Eliezer departed. Abraham probably escorted him for a short distance, or he followed him with his eyes and prayed God to attend Eliezer on the journey with His divine blessing.

Eliezer traveled the familiar road toward the north, on the east side of the Jordan. He passed through the city of Damascus and then followed the great mercantile highway, until he came to Haran (map). Right outside of this city there was a well, not merely a cistern, such as are commonly found in hot countries, but a well fed by a spring. It had been carefully surrounded by a stone wall, steps led down to the edge of the water and at the top troughs were placed into which the people poured the water from the spring when they came to water their cattle. At this well Eliezer stopped to rest with his camels, which were very thirsty from the day's journey. It was around evening time, when the young women of the city used to come out to the well to get fresh drinking water.

Eliezer must have been very happy and most thankful to God as he sat down upon the stones that enclosed the well. So far God had attended him with His blessing; but how were things going to develop now? The most difficult part of his mission was still to be carried out. How was he going to find his way to the homes of his master's relatives? And among these, how was he to select the girl that would be suitable for his master Isaac, a girl spry and strong, obliging and ready for service, clean and chaste, and not altogether without a knowledge of the living God? He did what he had learned to do from his master. He knew that Abraham, his master,

always prayed to God in every difficult situation, and allowed himself to be led by Him. He had long since found out that there is no better way, and his frame of mind may be given expression in the words of a familiar hymn, which reads thus: "In every undertaking my plans are of His making who wisely rules on high. To Him my prayer ascendeth, and He good counsel lendeth, His help is ever nigh". So in the present instance Eliezer also prayed to his God and said, "Lord, show kindness to my master Abraham. The daughters of this city will come out to draw water. Now, if a damsel comes to whom I shall say 'Give me a drink', and who shall answer, 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also', let her be the woman whom Thou hast provided for Thy servant Isaac". That was a prudent prayer; for by the way the girl answered Eliezer wanted to find out whether she was polite, obliging and diligent; a frivolous or disobliging girl would have given him, the old man, a snippy answer and let him stand; and a slow, lazy girl would probably have given him a drink, but would not have run back to the well more than twenty times to draw water also for the ten camels; but when a girl so forgets her own work as to think only of serving an old and strange man, one may take it for granted that she has a good and pious heart. But Eliezer's prayer was not only marked by prudence; one also can notice that he was not talking with God for the first time in his life; he prayed so simply and in such a childlike spirit as one can only pray after years of experience, entreating God as beloved children entreat their affectionate parents.

Such childlike and heart-felt prayers God hears and answers. For "the Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them". Hardly had Eliezer finished praying, when there came out to the well Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother. She carried a

pitcher upon her shoulder. Rebekah, however, was fair to look upon and still a virgin. She went down to the well, filled her pitcher and came up again. Eliezer walked toward her and said, "I pray you, give me a little water to drink". She quickly let the pitcher down upon her hand, as we see it here in our picture, and offered Eliezer a drink, saying, "Drink, my lord, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have all drunk", and already she was running down the steps of the well with her pitcher, to draw water. She did the same thing over and over again. She did not think, "The old fellow might do this himself", or, "There in the background I see his servants sitting, they could do it for him". No, she did it of her own accord, without murmuring, and kept at it until all the ten camels had been watered. Eliezer quietly sat there and watched her. His heart laughed within him. A better wife could not be found for Isaac, with his large household. He could not help wondering that God had heard his prayer so soon and in such a striking manner. When Rebekah had finished watering the camels, Eliezer walked up to one of the camels, opened a sack and drew from it a golden ring and two golden bracelets, and gave them to Rebekah. What eyes she must have made! She had not in the least expected any reward for her services, much less such beautiful and costly presents. Here you girls, and also you boys, may see how God will bless you if you are always friendly and ready to lend a hand. Often our fortune depends upon real small and insignificant things that we do for people whom we do not even know. By giving an aged servant a drink of water, and filling the watering trough for his camels, Rebekah became a princess, the wife of the highly respected Isaac. And Jesus once said to His disciples, "Whatsoever you have done to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me". He also says that one who in His name gives to any one a drink of cold water shall not lose his reward. Therefore, children, make it a point al-

ways to be friendly and ready to serve, whoever the person may be that needs your services. We should be kindly disposed toward all people. There was only one thing left about which Eliezer needed information. Did Rebekah belong to the relatives of Abraham? For it was from among the kinsfolk of his master that he had to choose a wife for Isaac. So he said to Rebekah, "My daughter, to whom do you belong? And is there room in your father's house for us to lodge in?" She answered, "I am Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel. We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge in". When Eliezer heard these words, he could not but thank God from his heart; he had learned how true the saying is, "Cast all your cares on Him; He careth for you". God Himself had made him carefree, and let him find the girl that he was seeking for Isaac. He bowed down to the earth and said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has led me to the house of my master's brother".

By this time Rebekah also knew who Eliezer was, and she ran back into the city, returned to her mother and told her all that had happened to her at the well. Now, when Rebekah's brother saw the ring and the bracelets on the hands of his sister and heard her words, he hastened and went out to the well and said to Eliezer, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? I have prepared the house, and made room for the camels". The greeting, "thou blessed of the Lord", pleased Eliezer; for it showed that in Rebekah's house the living God had not been entirely forgotten. So he gladly accepted the invitation of her brother, Laban, who led him into the house, ungirded the camels, gave them straw and feed, and also brought the men water to wash their feet. Meanwhile, the mother of Rebekah had prepared supper, which Laban placed before the men. And they were not slow to help themselves—yes, that is what you think; for it had grown late, and they were all good and hungry. Who could have blamed them if they had started to eat with-

out waiting a moment longer than necessary? But no, that was not Eliezer's way. Now we are made to see more clearly than ever what a faithful soul he was. He at no time thought first of himself, but always gave first attention to the affairs of his master. Tired and hungry as he was, he said, "I will not eat until I have told my errand". They said to him, "Speak on". Then Eliezer told them everything that Abraham had commanded him, and all that had occurred at the well. He ended by saying, "And now, if you will deal kindly with my master, and let Rebekah be his son Isaac's wife, then tell me". Her brother Laban and her father Bethuel answered, "The thing proceeds from the Lord; take Rebekah and let her go with you, that she may become Isaac's wife". When Eliezer heard these words, he bowed down and thanked God from his heart. Then he arose and gave Rebekah, her brother and her mother costly presents that he had brought with him. And now at last he sat down and ate and drank with his men, and staid over night in Bethuel's house.

The next morning Eliezer said, "Let me at once return to my master, and take Rebekah with me". They tried to detain him. They told him that he was an old man and needed a time of rest after such a long and tiresome journey. It also seemed rather sudden to them to let Rebekah go away without getting used to the thought of her departure. But the faithful servant answered, "Hinder me not. The Lord has prospered my way, and I must return to my master at once and let him hear the good news, and present Rebekah to his son Isaac". Then they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?" She answered, "Yes, I will go with him". She also had noticed that God must have had a hand in the matter; how, then, could she refuse to go with Eliezer? So they blessed Rebekah and sent her away.

On the journey Rebekah found much to see and to ask. She must have gained more and more respect for Eliezer, too,

when he showed and told her everything. He was so well informed, could give her such thorough information, and always spoke of Abraham and Isaac with love and respect, that she must have thought to herself, "He surely is a model servant; and if their servant is such an excellent man, what must not his masters be, Abraham and Isaac?" Well, she was soon to find out. Already they were drawing near to Beersheba, and Eliezer, as we may imagine, raised his finger, and, pointing into the distance, exclaimed, "There are the tents of my master". God so willed it that Isaac came along the way, for he had been down at the well at which the Lord had once appeared, and there had confided the whole matter of his marriage to God in prayer. When Rebekah saw him, she asked Eliezer, half anticipating his reply, "Who is this man that is coming to meet us?" Eliezer answered, in accordance with her own happy guess, "It is my master Isaac". Then she took her veil-like mantle and covered herself, as women were then in the habit of doing when they met men, especially was this custom observed in the case of a bride meeting her future husband. When Isaac had come near enough to welcome the returning servants, Eliezer told him how wonderfully everything had come to pass. From what Eliezer said, Isaac also could see that the hand of God had come into play in providing a helpmeet for him, and he received Rebekah with joy and gratitude, as a gift from God. Afterwards he led Rebekah into the tent of his mother Sarah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. Abraham's wish was fulfilled: Isaac had a wife, provided for him by God Himself, a woman friendly and obliging, strong and diligent, pure and chaste, and not without some knowledge of the living God. Now he could die in peace, being able to hope that in his son's family, as heretofore in his own, only the living God would be worshiped and revered.

Children, is this not indeed a lovely story? As we think of the different persons that figure in it, we hardly know

which one to give the preference. Each one, when we view him or her, seems to outstrip the others. Let us briefly glance at them as they pass in review before us. There is the unspoiled Rebekah, with the dew of youth still upon her. There is Eliezer, as true as gold, keeping the fourth commandment, a model for all servants even today. There is the quiet Isaac, who is willing that the choice of his life companion should be decided for him, and gladly submits to the ways of God. But over and above all others, there again is Abraham, in whose sight only one thing is truly great and desirable, the real and genuine fear of God. By Abraham's example the heathen servant Eliezer was so influenced as to become a pious, God-fearing man; his example also taught Isaac to fear, love and trust in God above all things; and by his faithful exercise of care, as well as his unceasing prayers, he laid the foundation for a house and family in which true piety was to be cultivated also after he himself had closed his eyes in death. So he could die in peace; his mission on earth was fulfilled. He was 175 years old when his earthly life came to a close. His remains were placed beside those of Sarah in the cave of Mach-pelah, and Isaac, his beloved son, was there to perform this last sad duty to his father. Though Abraham was dead, Isaac could not forget him, but held him in loving remembrance as long as he lived. Nor should we forget Abraham. Let us, then, remember him, children, and learn of him. That which we must regard as the greatest thing in him is his faith. It was this that pleased God most in him. The true and living faith that wholly and completely trusts in God must also abide in our hearts. Then we will be, as Abraham was, obedient, peaceable, unselfish, sympathetic, brave and full of confidence in all the varying conditions of life, making the grace of God the only foundation of our hope. So let us, in concluding our study of Abraham, the man of faith, once more voice the prayer,

"Lord Jesus, who this precious light
Within my heart hast gendered,
O let my faith, that inner sight,
Be strong and brighter rendered;
What here Thou hast begun in me
Wilt Thou increase, till there I see
Of faith the consummation.

34. How Jacob Deceived His Father and His Brother.

Isaac led Rebekah into the tent of his mother Sarah, and she became his wife, and he loved her—that is what we heard the last time. How did Isaac and Rebekah continue to prosper in their married life? The Bible tells us something about their history, but not nearly so much as about Abraham and his Sarah. Like his father, Isaac was a shepherd king, but he was less firm in his ways and for this reason often had to suffer ill treatment on the part of his neighbors. At different times they drove him from his pastures, and once they even filled his cisterns with earth, so that he had no water for his cattle. Isaac generally yielded and moved somewhere else, instead of taking a firm stand and defending his good rights. As he was on the day of his offering, quiet and yielding, and in the matter of his marriage, which he accepted from the hand of God, without any thought of offering resistance, so we find him, for the most part, in his further career. He ever loved Rebekah, and she was indeed an able helpmeet for him. She may at times have defended her husband when he seemed to her rather too submissive over against his neighbors, if they treated him unfairly. But one thing grieved them both very much. They had already been married for 19 years, and were still without children; it was with them as it had been with Abraham and Sarah. They were to find out that children are the gift of God and must be asked of Him in

prayer. Isaac learned to understand this, too, and often prayed that God might give him a son, so that the great promise of the Lord to Abraham would be fulfilled, according to which he was to become the father of many nations and the Savior of the world was to spring from his descendants. And behold, God heard his prayers, saying to Rebekah, "Thou wilt bear two sons, and the older will serve the younger". As the Lord had said, so it came to pass. Rebekah gave birth to twins. The firstborn she called Esau and the secondborn Jacob. With the children, much joy came into the home of Isaac and Rebekah; but through the children, not without the fault of the parents, also no little sorrow entered their life. It is about this that I must tell you today. You are to be told **how Jacob deceived his father and his brother.**

From their very birth, there was a great difference between Esau and Jacob. Esau was red and rough all over like a hairy garment when he came into the world; he looked like a little bear. That is why his mother named him Esau, because Esau means one who is hairy. Jacob, on the contrary, was smooth and tender. As they grew up, their parents saw that they did not only differ outwardly, but also inwardly, in their whole disposition. What the one liked, that the other loathed; the joy of the one was the bane of the other. Hardly could Esau walk when he began to wade in all the mud-puddles and climb onto everything, while Jacob staid clean and remained at home, like a good boy. When Esau was a lad of from 12 to 14 years, he jumped across the widest ditch, plunged into the deepest water, climbed the highest trees and delighted in roaming about in the fields and forests. Jacob, on the contrary, preferred to stay in the tent with his mother and do things for her, such as running on errands. When it happened that Esau brought home some fine berries, or some rare bird, then, I imagine, Jacob felt a desire to have it and perhaps would give Esau a bright button or an apple for it. Jacob had in his heart something that made him

want what others had, especially what he saw Esau have, and he would bargain for it like a little Jew. And it was very seldom that he got the worst of the bargain. He did not have his name for nothing. Jacob, you should know, means a cunning fellow, one who knows how to take advantage of others and get the best of them.

The boys gradually became men. Then the difference between them was still more noticeable. Esau had turned into a proud hunter. It was his delight to take his bow and arrow and look for game in the fields and in the woods. He took little interest in the work at home and among the herds. For such work one needed composure, patience and perseverance, qualities that Esau utterly lacked. He was restless and impetuous, lived for the moment only, was not concerned about the future, and even to make plans for it and worry about them never entered his head. If he only had something to eat when he was hungry, he was satisfied. But he did want plenty to eat, and he had not the patience to wait for it long either. He wanted to eat at once when the desire for food asserted itself. If his father talked to him about the herds, if he tried to teach him how to raise and sell cattle so as to make something at it, Esau might listen for a while, but soon his thoughts began to wander, and in imagination he was with the rabbits and the deers, the partridges and the other birds, out in the woods and in the fields, and as soon as he saw a chance he would break off the conversation with his father and disappear. Isaac, his father, did not like this any too well. All his ancestors, Abraham, Terah and many others, had been shepherds and led a quiet life, and here was Esau with an entirely different bent of mind, wanting to become something else, trying to choose his own way independently. Who would, in the future, take care of the herds, keep up the property and see to its increase, if the oldest son took no interest whatever in such things? For as the firstborn, he, in accordance with the custom of the times, was

to be the heir, take the place of his father and rule, not only over the man-servants and maid-servants, but also over his brother Jacob. But when Esau brought home from the chase some fine game and made his father a dinner of meat that tasted much better than that of the calves and lambs, and when Isaac then thought of what a quick, strong, courageous man Esau was, who knew how to stand up for his rights, while Jacob was there to take care of the herds, his mind became relieved again and Esau remained his favorite son, as he had been all along. That, of course, only tended to make Esau all the more set in his love for the chase, and in all his other characteristic traits.

As for Jacob, he differed from Esau also after he had come to be a man. He was a man of quiet habits. No less than in his boyhood days, he liked to help his mother along with the many duties that she had to fulfill, and as for the herds, there was no one more familiar with their ways and needs than he. He was concerned about their weal and woe; he took delight in seeing their numbers increase; he figured out how much profit could be made by selling them at a certain rate; he knew all the tricks of the shepherds, as well as those of the cattle buyers, and they had to be pretty shrewd to beat him at a sale. He was diligent, and always kept his eyes fixed on the future. No doubt, it often made him feel bad when he had to say to himself that the time was coming when Esau would be the head of the house. "What will become of the herds then? Will not the servants do as they please? Will not the whole wealth of my father soon have gone to waste? Oh, if I only were the firstborn, if I only could some day be master of the house instead of Esau, how I would attend to everything, how I would see to it that progress should be made in every direction!" Such were the thoughts that often busied and troubled his mind. At times he most likely expressed them to his mother, since he was her favorite son. Instead of reproving him and doing her

part in making him take the right stand over against his brother, and perhaps also his father, she sided with him, thus helping to strengthen him in his covetous and unbrotherly thoughts and desires. More than likely, she also told him of the great promises that had been given to Abraham and renewed to Isaac for his descendants, the promises of the beautiful land, of the great people and the unspeakable blessing that through it would come upon all the people of the earth. She probably told him also of the word that was spoken before his birth: "The older shall serve the younger". But the more Jacob heard of this, the more covetous he became to occupy the position that belonged to Esau, as the firstborn, the less he was contented with his position as the secondborn. For his mother did not say to him, "Although it is God's will that you become master of the house and the forefather of the Savior, you still must wait until God so arranges. You must not lust after it, much less do anything to gain the right of the firstborn. Be still, and wait for the Lord". Yes, that is what she should have said when she saw the covetous eye and noticed the covetous thoughts of Jacob. Perhaps Jacob would have remembered it, and much sin and sorrow would thus have been spared to him. As it was, the lust after Esau's right and place came to be more and more deeply rooted in his heart, and grew to such an extent that he finally thought of nothing but the right of the firstborn, and again and again asked himself the question, "By what scheme can I obtain this right, in order that not Esau, but I, may some day be master of the house and become the forefather of Him through whom all the nations of the earth are to be blessed?"

The chance for which he was watching came suddenly. He had just prepared a mess of pottage, such as people in that country like to make even today, and was about to eat it, when Esau came storming in from the chase, tired and hungry in the extreme. As soon as he saw Jacob with his mess

of pottage, he said to him eagerly, "Let me devour some of that red pottage; for I am faint". By this you can tell what a rough, sensuous fellow he was. He was at home. He could have cooked some pottage for himself; in a few minutes it would have stood on the table. But no, he is so eager to eat that he does not want to wait another minute. "Let me devour it," he says, "I must have it this very moment". How little power of self-control he must have had! How completely he must have been the slave of his lower instincts! When the sly, calculating Jacob noticed this, he said to himself, "Here is your chance; be sure to take advantage of it". Quickly his mind was made up, and he said to Esau, "Yes, you shall have the pottage, but you must sell me your birthright for it, so that from now on I shall be regarded as the firstborn". Then Esau laughed lightly and remarked, "Well, if that is all you want, you may have it. What good will my birthright do me? I shall have to die anyway". He thinks only of the present moment, not of the future, when he would have been lord and priest in the house; much less does he consider that in the house of Abraham and Isaac the right of the firstborn has a meaning far beyond his death, that long after he is dead and buried the Savior of the world will spring from his descendants and become a blessing to all nations. Let the future take care of itself, as long as he can now, in the present, satisfy his hunger by eating a plate of soup. How thoughtless and earthly minded! Esau did not stand far above the beasts of the field, which also have no desire above that of filling their hungry stomachs. Already Esau was reaching for the dish, when his sly and all-calculating brother said to him, "No, not so fast! You must first swear unto me by the living God that I am to be the firstborn in your place". He knew how fickle-minded Esau was and thought, "After he has once satisfied his hunger, or later, when I want to claim the right of the firstborn, he may change his mind and refuse to give up his right; this he can not do if he

swears that he renounces his right in my favor". So in order to make the matter sure, and binding for all time, he had his brother take an oath. And Esau, who in his eagerness to eat the pottage was ready to meet any condition, yielded to his brother also in this particular. He took the oath, and thus the sly Jacob had tied the sensuous Esau for all time.

To be sure, Esau had acted without forethought, as one altogether earthly minded and godless; eager as he was to eat the pottage, he should never have sold his birthright to obtain it; that simply showed that he had no sense of appreciation for the permanent; eternal, but only for the momentary, temporal, earthly pleasures. It was as much as if a king's son should exchange his future throne for a slice of bread and butter. That is why the Holy Scriptures say that "Esau despised his birthright". On the other hand, Jacob did not act right either. True, for the future, for the promised blessing, he had a sense of appreciation, and that was well and good; but that he was so covetous of the right of the firstborn, that he could not wait until God appointed him to the place of honor, that he took advantage of Esau's weakness and drove home a sharp bargain, giving a mere pittance for a thing of great value, that was wrong and indeed a grave sin. Such an act could not prove a source of blessing to him. Shrewd he had shown himself, but his good conscience he had thereby forfeited. To lose one's good conscience, however, is far worse than to lose hundreds of dollars and thousands of sheep and camels.

Jacob had thus cheated his brother out of the right of the firstborn. But what good was it going to do him if his father would not consent to the bargain, if he had made up his mind to bless Esau, and would carry his will into effect? It seemed necessary for Jacob also to deceive his father, in order that he might be blessed, and not Esau. It is evident that Jacob's deed brought him no rest of mind, but only uneasiness, and that one sin is apt to lead to another.

Isaac, by the way, likewise did not do as he should have done. He knew the divine word, "The older shall serve the younger", and therefore should have made no attempt to give his favorite son the inheritance and the blessing; he should have submitted to the will of God. But in this instance he did not want to do it. He preferred to give the inheritance and the blessing to Esau. What he saw in Esau and heard of him should have prompted him all the more to act according to God's word. For what could be expected of Esau if he was so fickle-minded and had his thoughts fixed altogether on things earthly? Besides, Esau had taken two wives, and both were Canaanites. It will be seen from this that he was utterly unable to appreciate the difference existing between his father's house and the heathen round about. Abraham had made Eliezer swear not to take a woman of the Canaanites to be Isaac's wife, and, behold, Esau took two at a time. They pleased him, and so, as in the case of the pottage, he forgot everything else, and took them to be his wives. These two heathen women caused Isaac and Rebekah many a heart-ache. But in spite of all this, Isaac decided to grant Esau the blessing of the firstborn. And when the light of his eyes had grown dim, so that he could see but very little, and believed that his end was near at hand, he said to Esau, "Behold, I have grown old and do not know when I may die. Go, therefore, take thy quiver and bow, get me a venison such as I am fond of, and prepare it for me, that my soul may bless thee before I pass away". Esau quickly started out to do as his father had told him, so that he might receive the blessing of the firstborn.

When Rebekah heard what Isaac said to Esau, she was quite startled. "Is this Esau after all to receive the blessing, and my own dear Jacob to be dismissed with empty hands? Is it to be for nothing that he has all these years been attending to the herds so carefully, and is he to derive no benefit from the right of the firstborn that Esau sold to

him?" Thus she asked, and she went on to say to herself, "No, this must not be permitted; it is entirely against God's will, too; for God said before these children were born, 'The older shall serve the younger'. I must help out a little in this affair, so that my aged husband may not act altogether contrary to God's will, and that my dear Jacob, and not this Esau, may receive the blessing". She had soon thought of a plan to accomplish her purpose. Having called Jacob as quickly as she could, she said to him, "I heard your father talking to Esau; he has sent him out into the field to bring him a venison; and when he has eaten it, he wants to give him the blessing of the firstborn. That must not be, because you know well enough that according to God's will you are to have the blessing. So do what I tell you. Go to the herds and fetch me two tender young goats, that I may prepare savory meat for your father, such as he loves. Then you take it in to him before Esau comes back, that he may impart the blessing to you; he can not see well any more and will not know whom he is blessing". This was quite in accord with Jacob's wishes; for what good would it do him to have bought the right of the firstborn for a mess of pottage if Isaac should now bless Esau anyway? Jacob wanted the blessing at any price. But **one** thought troubled him in connection with Rebekah's plan. He was not concerned about deceiving his brother and even his old, blind father; that did not seem to bother him in the least, if he could only attain his purpose. He only wondered whether the way that Rebekah proposed would lead to the desired goal. Therefore he said to his mother, "Yes, dear mother, I am quite agreed; but you know, my brother Esau is rough and I am smooth. If my father should feel of me, he would notice that I tried to deceive him, and I would bring upon myself a curse instead of a blessing". But his mother quieted him, saying, "The curse be upon me, my son; only do as I tell you". So Jacob went and brought two tender young goats. Of these his mother

quickly prepared savory meat, such as Isaac loved. She also put Esau's good clothes upon Jacob, which were saturated with the smell of the herbs in the field, and wrapped the skins of the two young goats around his hands and neck, where he was smooth. Then Jacob took the savory meat and brought it to his father.

When Jacob entered the door, his father asked him, "Who art thou, my son?" Jacob answered, "I am Esau, thy firstborn". He really had the face to lie to his blind father, the sight of whom did not bring him to his senses. With a firm voice he added, "I have done according to thy command; arise, eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me". Isaac said in sheer surprise, "How is it that today thou hast found a venison so quickly?" For this question Jacob had not been prepared; but the slick deceiver soon collected his thoughts and answered, with the pretention of piety, "Because the Lord thy God sent me good speed". So the name of God had to serve him as a cloak to cover up his deception. O children, be on your guard against sin; for one sin always leads to another and greater. And yet, Isaac did not feel quite sure of his ground; he must have been deceived by his people before since he was so mistrustful, and in this important matter he had to be prepared for all kinds of deception, while he wanted to be altogether sure of what he was doing. So he said, "Come near, my son, that I may feel thee, whether thou be my very son Esau or not". Jacob went up to him, and after his father had felt of him, he said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau". And he did not discover that it was Jacob who stood before him. So he ate what Jacob had brought him, and then said to him, "Come near now, and kiss me, my son". By the sense of smell he wanted to discern what he had not been able to tell by the senses of sight and touch. But sly Rebekah had also made provision for this emergency. For when Jacob kissed his father, then it was that he, the father, smelt the smell of

Esau's garments, which Jacob had put on, and this took away his last doubts as to whether he really had Esau before him. So he blessed Jacob and said, "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth; let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be everyone that blesses thee". It was the whole, unabridged blessing, which God had pronounced upon Abraham and then also upon Isaac. It now was passed on to Jacob. But he could not feel happy over it, because he had obtained it only by the most shameful deception. Instead of the blessing, nothing but misfortune at first came upon Jacob, and he had to say to himself, "I have richly deserved it by sinning so shamefully against my old, blind father".

For hardly had Jacob gone out of his father's tent, when Esau returned from the chase. He made savory meat for his father, took it in to him and said, "Arise; my father, eat of my venison and bless me". But Isaac inquired, "Who art thou?" Esau answered, "I am Esau, thy firstborn son". Then Isaac began to tremble, for he realized that he had been deceived by Jacob, and he said, half bewildered, "Who then is the hunter that has brought me venison before thy return? I have blessed him and"—this he added, noticing now that in spite of all sinning on the part of Rebekah, Jacob and himself, God had accomplished His will—"he shall be blessed". When Esau heard this, he cried bitterly, and exclaimed, "Bless me, even me also, my father". But Isaac answered, "Thy brother came with guile, and hath taken away thy blessing". Then Esau said, "Hast thou not **reserved** a blessing for me?" He began to see now that his father's blessing meant something even for this earthly life, and he did not want to be without it any longer. And Isaac said, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be away from the fatness of the earth, and from the dew of heaven from above: by thy sword shalt thou live and serve thy broth-

er: and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck". That blessing sounded quite unlike the one that Jacob had received. It contained only one bright spot: the descendants of Esau were not forever to serve the descendants of Jacob. This prophecy came true, though at a very distant time. The descendants of Esau, who were called Edomites, inhabited the stony, unfertile, mountainous region of Seir (map) as their land, and not until nearly 2000 years later did they succeed under king Herod in gaining dominion over the descendants of Jacob. Herod, it should be observed, was an Edomite.

Instead of seeing, in all that had happened, the ruling hand of God and to repent of his earthly mindedness, Esau began to hate Jacob because of the blessing and said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; for I will slay my brother Jacob". Of all the sins that have been set forth to us in our story, this would have been the greatest one.

Today's story is thus a very sad one, a story full of sin and disgrace. What could have been all joy and happiness, the relation between Isaac and Rebekah, between Jacob and Esau, between the two sons and their parents; what might have been the brightest moment in the life of the family, the moment when the parents blessed their children, each in accordance with God's will and word, all this was poisoned and robbed of its sweetness, yea, gave rise to pain, disappointment and tears. Why? Because all concerned did not want to submit to God's ways, because Esau was earthly minded, because Isaac would not permit himself to acknowledge God's will, because Jacob was covetous and together with Rebekah thought it necessary to help God along just a little, in order that His will might be carried into effect. Therefore, children, remember this: Sin can poison everything, even things that are the most beautiful and the most sacred. O that we would stand shy of sin, as of the most dangerous serpent!

Take it to heart: Our God is a mighty God, able to accomplish His will without our uncalled-for meddling. Let us patiently wait for Him to do His will, and not try to help Him along by dishonest, sinful methods. In the end, He will have everything turn out well. "What God ordains, that will I do, no other wish possessing; for if what He ordains ensue, how great will be the blessing!" Least of all, children, dare you follow the advice of those who say, "One must occasionally lie and deceive for a good cause". That saying itself is a big lie. The Almighty does not need and does not want our lies and deceptions. He is able without them to save, help, and lead to a good end. To the well known Pastor Oberlin in Steinthal a girl had fled whose parents, brothers and sisters had been killed in the French Revolution. Although she had not harmed any one, they looked for her everywhere, intending to kill her, like her parents and the other members of her family. One morning some policemen appeared in Oberlin's house to look for her there. What was he to do? Should he lie and say that the girl for whom they were looking was not in the house? His conscience would not have permitted this. He firmly believed: if God wants to save the life of the girl, He can do it without my lie. So he commended her to God and told the policemen, "I will take you all through the house, so that you may find out for yourselves whether or not the girl is here". So he went ahead of them and led them into the various rooms that the house contained. At last they came to a little room in which the girl was. Oberlin himself threw the door open, but the girl could not be seen anywhere. So the policemen went away again, convinced that she was nowhere in the whole house. But how had this happened? The girl had not yet finished dressing, and therefore stepped back of the door when she heard steps coming toward it. For this reason the policemen, looking into her room, did not see her. God had saved her, and He had done it without the help of a lie on the part of the owner of

the house. So never lie and deceive to help God along. He can and will reach His goal without such help.

35. How Jacob Had to Flee From His Brother, But in His Dream Saw the Heavens Open.

The last story was a sad one; for it is always sad when people want to pursue ways of their own choosing instead of those which God appoints for them. That, however, is what Rebekah and Jacob, Isaac and Esau did, although in different ways. Esau was determined to kill Jacob for having cheated him out of the blessing of the firstborn, and yet he himself had sold his birthright to him for a plate of lentil-soup. Isaac desired to give Esau the blessing, while he was perfectly aware that according to God's will Jacob was to have it. Rebekah and Jacob could not contain themselves until God should, in His own way, bring it about that Jacob received the blessing; they were desirous of helping God along just a little, even if it would compel them to lie and deceive. Slyly and prudently, indeed, they went at it; but sin remains sin, however sly one may be in committing it, and a story of people's sin is always a sad story. But today I am able to tell you a story of the opposite type. Sad in its beginning, it ends altogether beautifully and charmingly. The story relates **how Jacob had to flee from his brother, but in a dream saw the heavens open.**

"The days of mourning for my father are at hand, for I will slay my brother Jacob," these words of wrath Esau had spoken as he left his father's tent. Rebekah did not directly hear Esau give vent to this terrible threat, but very likely one of the servants told her about it. On hearing it, she became greatly alarmed. She had considered her plans so finely spun, and now they were going to end in such disaster! In the agony of her soul she ought to have taken refuge to God, saying, "Wilt Thou take this matter into Thy hands,

for I am unable to go any farther with it". But instead of that she again started to devise a plan of her own for rescuing Jacob from the wrath of his brother. The rescue was to be affected in such a way as not to let Isaac know her real aim and purpose. It did not take long until she saw her way clear. In order not to lose any time, she at once called Jacob into her tent and told him of Esau's great wrath and evil intentions. She ended her conversation with Jacob by saying to him, "Therefore, arise and flee to Haran and stay there with my brother Laban until your brother's fury turns away. I will go into the tent of your father and speak to him about the matter". That was bad news for Jacob, and we can imagine that tears came to his eyes when his mother talked to him about his having to leave her and depart for a strange land. He had never been more content than when at home with his mother. Even when he cheated his father and his brother, he had done it partly for the reason that he might always stay at home, tending the cattle and lording over his father's possessions. But Jacob also clearly saw the necessity of acting upon his mother's advice, and so with a heavy heart he agreed to her plans. Esau was liable to do most anything when once his temper was thoroughly aroused. But after his wrath had spent itself, he was capable also of forgetting an injury inflicted upon him. Rebekah, therefore, hastened to see Isaac, and spoke to him something like this: "You know what heartache these two wives of Esau cause us; we must not let Jacob likewise take a wife of the Canaanites that live around us. Let him do as you did once upon a time. Send him to Haran, that from there he may get a wife that also believes in the living God. The best plan will be to have him visit my brother Laban at Haran in Mesopotamia. When he is once there, everything else will come about naturally". That she wanted Jacob just now to leave home for quite another reason, she did not disclose to Isaac. The plan of Rebekah appealed to Isaac, especially since Jacob was

to be the head of the house and the one through whom the blessing of God was to come upon all nations. Rebekah insisted that Jacob undertake the journey at once. Quickly she packed his most necessary belongings in a bundle, while Jacob went into his father's tent and took leave of him. Isaac did not bear him any grudge for having been deceived by him; he understood that he himself had resisted God's will by wanting to bless Esau, and that everything had to turn out as it did. So he said to Jacob, "Go, my son; God Almighty be with you and give you the blessing of Abraham". Then Jacob also bade farewell to his mother Rebekah. No doubt, they both wept many a tear; but finally Jacob tore himself loose, threw his bundle across his shoulder, grasped his staff and walked away, unnoticed by his brother Esau.

There is nothing more delightful than to wander for days through some beautiful part of God's earth. One great drawback in our own country is that there are not enough streets and paths to be used by the wanderer on his journeys through the land. But ask those who have made a trip to Europe, whether it is not enjoyable there to wander through field and forest, now along some clear stream, then again to some high place from which one has an outlook far into the distance. Jacob was starting out as a wanderer. But wandering brought no joy to his heart. Why not? There were reasons. He had to leave his home and was on his way to a strange land. Such parting is always painful. Or do your older brothers, when they have to leave for camp and for France, laughingly and jokingly take leave of father and mother? To leave home and not to know when one will return, does not give rise to feelings of joy and gladness. When one does not have to go all alone, but has others to bear him company, perhaps from his own town or rural community, leaving home is not quite so hard. But Jacob went his way alone, and if he saw any one at a distance, he went out of the road, in order to avoid coming together with him. For he

was a fugitive, fleeing from his own brother. How was he to know whether any chance companion might not be the very one to betray him to Esau? For Jacob, this took all the joy out of wandering. And do you know what troubled him most on his journey? It was his bad conscience. That kept saying into his ear, "You are yourself to blame for having to go into a strange country, you deceived your old blind father and tried to cheat your own brother out of his birthright. You wanted everything, now you must leave everything and do not know whether you shall ever have your share of it". Such a bad conscience is a bad traveling companion; one can not shake him off like an undesirable person; one is not able to run away from him, but has to take him along everywhere; nor is it an easy matter to make him keep still, he ever is heard again and his voice grows louder and louder. He does not permit one to see anything of the beautiful scenery along the way; he will not allow one to sit down, but prompts one restlessly to move on and converts the joy of wandering into sheer torture. No wonder that Jacob was deathly tired when evening came and night spread her dark shadows over hill and dale. Where was he to spend the night? At some distance he saw the houses of a little town, but he did not risk entering it and looking for a place of shelter. Possibly Esau had sent messengers after him, who would be more liable to find him in a town than out in the field. "Safety first," Jacob thought, and staid where he was. As he looked about, he noticed a place which was somewhat elevated and upon which there lay a large flat stone. He walked to that place, laid his bundle upon the stone for a pillow, and reclined to rest his head upon it. Such was his primitive bed. Under him he had the hard ground and above him the open sky. Of whom did he probably think before he fell asleep? Without doubt, he thought of his mother at home and of his aged father, of the stately tent in which he had heretofore slept, of the soft furs upon which he had until now stretched

out for the night, of the man-servants and maid-servants, and of the herds large and small. And as all these images of home arose in his mind, especially as he recalled the image of his mother whom he was compelled to leave, tear after tear formed in his eyes and ran down his cheeks. Nor was he ashamed of his tears. He allowed them to have their course. But in addition to such thoughts of home and mother, he had his conscience to keep his mind busy. It made his heart beat violently, and he was forced to realize this: Although I may flee from my brother, I can not escape from my sin; it is constantly before me. What did he do in this troubled state of mind? Children, I believe he prayed to God, saying, "Forgive me my sin!" And since he had secured the blessing of the firstborn by practicing shameful deceit, so that there was reason to fear that God might change the blessing to a curse, Jacob probably added, "Do not punish me for my sin in such a way as to take from me the blessing of my father or even permitting it to become a curse; pardon my guilt and permit the blessing to come true". With such prayers in his heart and upon his lips, he fell asleep.

Did God hear Jacob's prayer? Most assuredly; for He knows all things and is present in every place. He was present also where Jacob had made his bed for the night, and gave utterance to his fervent prayer. That God is in every place, is what the psalmist thought of when he said, "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me". But granted that God heard Jacob's prayer because He knows everything and is everywhere, did He also give him that for which he asked? Did He forgive him his sin and say to him, "Yes, I will let you be the firstborn, and in you shall the blessing of your father be realized"? Yes, children, God did this, too. For He is not only a God who punishes sin, but also

a God who forgives sin. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." And this is the very thing that makes our story so beautiful and so comforting: it shows us how God was gracious to sinful Jacob, and forgave him all his sins. "How," do you ask, "did God tell this to Jacob, so that it could make his heart glad?" This you shall hear presently.

He told it to Jacob by means of a dream, which He had him dream that very night. In this dream He told it to him in a twofold way, by an image that Jacob saw and by unmistakable words that he heard. The image was this one: In his dream Jacob saw a ladder. It stood on the earth and its top reached to heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending on this ladder, and God Himself was standing at its top. What meaning did this image have? By means of it, God wanted to say to Jacob, "Just as a ladder connects two places, the one that is above and the one that is below, so there is a connection between men on earth and Me, the living God in heaven. The angels bring the prayers of men up to Me and take gifts and blessings from Me down to men, gifts for which they have prayed. They are My messengers, whom I use when I want to send to men My blessing and lend them My protection. The angels have also borne your prayer up to Me, Jacob, and I will send them down again to you, that they may take to you My forgiveness and that they may attend you in all your ways". That is what God wanted to say to Jacob by means of this dream-image. But in order to make Jacob altogether sure of it, God also made it known to him in unmistakable words. For Jacob continued to dream, and heard God say, "I am the Lord God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land".

Was that not a lovely dream? It was the very answer that the sad Jacob needed, to become happy once more. Now he knew: God has forgiven me my sin; He will be with me on my way to Mesopotamia; He will also bring me back again and let the blessing of Isaac, pronounced upon me, come true. What else could he do but heartily rejoice when he awoke and began to reflect on the meaning of his dream? He was certain that this dream had not been accidental, but that through the same God had spoken to him. Therefore he exclaimed, full of wonder and adoration, "Surely, the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. How full of awe is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven". Then he arose, took the stone upon which his head had rested and set it up for a pillar, poured oil upon the top of it, as if to say, "Thou shalt be to me a never to be forgotten, sacred stone", and called the name of that place Bethel, which means, "house of God", because it was the place where God had spoken to him. Jacob also made a solemn vow to God, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone shall be God's house, an altar at which I shall worship and upon which I shall offer sacrifices to Him".

Having made this vow, Jacob continued on his journey. And now he had indeed become a happy wanderer; for he knew: "God has forgiven me my sin and His angels are at my side, so that neither Esau nor anyone else can harm me. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me". If one has had his sin forgiven, and is assured of God's protection, that makes him a happy wanderer, and Jacob now also began to take notice of the country through which he passed, discovering a thing of beauty here, and something to wonder at there. He no longer avoided company either, but was glad when he had a chance to

walk with some one on his way. "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come near thy dwelling. For I shall give My angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone", such was God's promise to him, and it was realized, too. Sooner perhaps than he had expected Jacob had arrived in Mesopotamia and was drawing near to the city of Haran. Outside of the city there was a well, the same one at which Eliezer had found Jacob's mother, Rebekah. At this well some shepherds were gathered with their sheep. Jacob went up to them and inquired, "My brethren, where are you at home?" They answered, "We are of Haran". And he said to them, "Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor?" They replied, "We know him well. Behold, there comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep". When Jacob saw Rachel, he was very glad. He went near, rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock. Then he kissed Rachel and told her that he was Rebekah's son. She, however, ran home and told her father, Laban. He ran to meet Jacob, embraced and kissed him, and brought him into his house. Thus God had kept His word and led Jacob on his way, so that he safely arrived at his destination and met his relatives at Haran in Mesopotamia.

"From His home in heaven, where the angels be, God looks down in kindness every child to see; hears the prayers it offers both by night and day, fatherly He shields it ever on its way"—thus we love to sing in one of our favorite hymns. With Jacob it was as this hymn says, and it is so with you, children. Wherever you may be, God is with you; and if from your heart you ask Him to grant you forgiveness, He will forgive you your sins and be with you, telling His angels to protect you on your way. God said all this to Jacob in a dream, to you and me He says it in His word. So we know it most surely. When we retire for the night, when we grow sick, when we are in trouble, or when, like

Jacob, we must leave home and go to a strange country, let us remember:

"From His home in heaven, where the angels be,
God looks down in kindness every child to see;
Hears the prayers it offers both by night and day,
Fatherly He shields it ever on its way."

36. How God in a Strange Land Took Jacob Into His School and at Last Brought Him Safely Home Again.

There is a double school through which we must go. In the one we sit upon benches from our sixth to our thirteenth year, and even much longer. There we learn reading, writing and arithmetic, and a lot of other things that are useful for life. If it be a Christian school, we also hear in it of God, how He became our Father through Jesus Christ, made us His children in holy baptism, and now wants us to hear His word and do His will. Even in this ordinary school many a one must put forth his very best efforts in order to keep up and learn something that is worth his while. But God also has another school into which He takes those who are already grown up, or even old and gray. This is the school of life. It likewise has lessons for us to learn and an examination that we must pass. It is the harder of the two schools, and if one does not pass the examination, he is eternally lost. God Himself is the Teacher in this school, and the lessons He assigns are diligence, faithfulness, humility and modesty, but especially trust in Him alone. The examination is given by Him at the moment of death. If at this decisive moment He finds that in the school of life one has learned faithfulness, diligence and many another virtue, but particularly faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in God as our Father for Christ's sake, He puts him into the upper class,

that is, He takes him into His heavenly kingdom. That one should be seated on the school bench for years and gain useful knowledge, is quite necessary and altogether desirable. Christian children especially must be diligent pupils. But that God afterwards should take us into the school of life and that we should allow ourselves to be trained by Him, is of far greater importance; for upon this depends our eternal salvation. O children, may none of us be numbered with those who have learned nothing in the school of life and who, therefore, can not pass the final examination. I want to tell you today **how God took Jacob into His school in a strange land, taught him many a wholesome lesson, and at last brought him safely home again.**

Through the first school that we are here considering Jacob had gone, even if he had not, like you, sat on a school bench. He had learned to read and to write, and he was especially good in numbers, being able to figure out almost instantly how much richer his father had grown in a year's time, and how much Esau would some day inherit. He had also learned a number of things from history, especially from the history of God's dealing with man. In particular, he knew how God had appeared to Abraham, Jacob's grandfather, in Chaldea, led him to the land of Canaan and repeatedly gave him the promise that through him and his descendants all the nations of the earth would be blessed. But now also to trust in God, without trying to help Him along in accomplishing His will, that Jacob had not yet learned. He always thought that his own prudence was necessary in bringing about the fulfillment of God's will and promise. This, as we have learned, led him to become a disgraceful liar and deceiver over against his brother and his father Isaac. Surely, the Jacob that had fled from his father's house to Mesopotamia still had many, many more things to learn. Or do you imagine that everything was all right with him as soon as God had appeared to him on the way and forgiven him

his sin? To be sure, God had granted him pardon for sin and given him the gracious promise, and He would not take back His word. But what would have become of Jacob if God had now allowed him to have his own way altogether, if He had not taken him into His school to change his whole heart and life more and more? What would have been the effect if God had at once prospered him there in Mesopotamia? I am inclined to believe, children, that Jacob would, under such circumstances, have become a real frivolous and haughty man, and would finally have thought that by his prudence and slyness he could accomplish almost anything. It was indeed quite necessary for Jacob to be taken into God's school, and thus to learn that he was unable to do anything by his own strength, that all depended upon the blessing of the Lord. If Jacob refused to learn this lesson, then he would have to lose again the forgiveness which he had already received, and God would not be able, either, to make good the promise which He, out of pure grace, had given him there at Bethel. A child that in any ordinary school does not want to let itself be trained by the teacher need not be surprised if it finally loses the teacher's favor, and in like manner he who in the school of life refuses to let God train him in everything that is good can not forever retain His grace and favor.

Now let us hear how God took Jacob into His school, and, during his sojourn in a strange land, succeeded in teaching him many a needed lesson. Already four weeks had passed by since Jacob was staying with his uncle Laban and helping him with the herds. Laban saw by this time that in Jacob he had a faithful and reliable servant. He himself could not have attended to the herds better than Jacob did. Such a servant one likes to keep as long as possible. Therefore Laban said to Jacob one day, "You have now been with me for a whole month, and I am entirely satisfied with you. You may remain my servant as long as you wish. Nor must you

think that you are to serve me for nothing just because you are my nephew. No, you only need to tell me what wages you would like to have". Now, Laban had two daughters; the older one was named Leah, and she was a dear girl, but not pretty at all; Rachel, the one whom Jacob had met at the well, was the younger daughter, and she was very fair to look upon. Jacob had already learned to love her during the four weeks of his stay in Laban's house, and so he said to Laban, "I will serve you seven years if at the end of that time you will give me Rachel for my wife". That one should serve to earn a wife and thus actually pay for her, seems strange to us. But such was the custom at that time among the heathen people everywhere. If a man wanted a woman, he had to pay her father a certain sum of money, or give cows and sheep in exchange for her. You will recall that Eliezer took along many presents, not only for Rebekah, but also for her father and brother. Jacob did not have anything that he could have given to Rachel, much less was he able to buy her from her father with money. That is why he said to him, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel". When Laban heard these words, he rejoiced within himself and thought, "I surely could not wish myself anything better: in this way Rachel will come to have an able husband and I shall obtain the best kind of a servant for my herds, without being obliged to pay out a single cent. This is a fine bargain". Laban, it should be said, was stingy and had no thought beyond that of increasing his pile of money, or the size of his herds. So he answered Jacob, "It will be better that you should have her than that someone else should become her husband. Stay with me, and she shall be yours". That Jacob and Rachel were indeed very nearly related to each other, and that it is not advisable to have such closely related folks marry one another, of this people in those days seem to have been but little aware. Thus Jacob served Laban seven years for Rachel. That was a long time, and

the service was hard; but Jacob loved Rachel and the time did not seem long to him. When the seven years were ended, the marriage was to take place. Laban prepared a great feast, to which he invited all the people of Haran. In the evening he led the bride to Jacob, according to the custom of the land. The bride was covered with many long and closely woven veils, so that no one could see her face. Jacob took her from Laban's hand. By this ceremony she had become his wife. He, of course, thought that she was Rachel. O how horrified he was the next morning when his wife had removed the veils, and he noticed that she was not Rachel but Leah! Jacob knew it was Laban's fault. He therefore went to him and asked, "Why did you deal thus with me? Had I not served you seven years for Rachel? Why, then, did you deceive me?" Laban replied, "It is not the custom here to give the younger in marriage before the older". This was, of course, a very poor excuse. If such a custom really existed, he must have known it seven years before. In reality it was an act of downright meanness. In order that he might retain Jacob as his servant still longer, without paying him wages, he played a treacherous game with the life-happiness both of his two daughters and of his nephew. One can imagine how Jacob must have suffered in consequence of such treatment. But, children, Jacob was thus to learn his first lesson in God's school. He was himself to experience how it hurts when in the most sacred things of life one is so shamefully deceived by his near relatives. Just as Laban deceived him in giving him the densely veiled Leah, as if she were Rachel, so had he put on Esau's garments, covered the smooth parts of his body with rough fur, and thus lightly made his blind father believe that he was Esau. Because God had soon afterwards forgiven him his sin and during the seven years that followed permitted him to be so happy as to make them seem like seven days, he might have forgotten his sin altogether, or at least regarded it as something trivial.

So God, taking him into His school in a strange land, had him learn how it hurts to be thus deceived. He was to find out what a grave thing it was for him so to afflict his poor blind father and his brother Esau with the most painful kind of deception, and what a wealth of grace God had bestowed upon him by forgiving him this heinous sin.

Jacob felt like flaring up at Laban, as Esau had against him; but what good would it have done? What could he, the stranger and servant, do against Laban? Even if he had found it possible to bring suit against Laban, it would have brought him no advantage. Rachel, whom his soul loved, and to whom he was entitled before God and man, would not thus have become his own. So he simply submitted to the inevitable, and he did it the more readily because Laban said to him, "When the wedding is over (which in the Orient lasted for a whole week) I will give you Rachel also, provided that you serve me seven years longer". This, by the way, showed plainly what Laban's whole intention had been in this transaction: he wanted Jacob to be his servant seven years more without receiving any wages. Jacob could see through it all, and it might have stirred his wrath all the more. But again, what was there to be gained by growing furious? If he desired to obtain Rachel as his wife, he simply was compelled to serve for her another period of seven years. To this he, therefore, agreed; for he loved Rachel too much to think of giving her up. Here he learned that one can not, by his own prudence, obtain everything his heart desires. And that was the second lesson which Jacob was to learn in God's school. Seven years previously he had been compelled to flee because he had deceived his father and his brother in such a shameful manner. Still, he had obtained the blessing, and God Himself had confirmed it. Now, if by his own prudence he had won Rachel, it might have caused him to think all the more that one only needs to use his own wits in order to accomplish his purpose. But he

is made to realize that such is not the case, that one may begin a thing very prudently and still be most miserably disappointed. This was a hard lesson, and Jacob did not learn it by only one trial. Many more were needed. However, he had now made a good beginning. He had begun to understand that in the end it is God who regulates man's life, and not man himself.

So Jacob came to have two wives, although this was not really in accord with his wishes. But to have more than one wife, is a bad thing. God knew why He, from the beginning, when He mated Adam and Eve, ordained that there should be **one** man and **one** woman. Where two women have the same husband, there is apt to be strife and contention, jealousy and many another cause of heartache. These evils also made themselves felt in Jacob's house, Rachel showing herself very proud during the first few years of her marriage. Those were hard years for Jacob. His work had not been easy even during the first seven years of his stay in Haran; for Laban was a severe master who in all things had an eye only for gain. Still, when Jacob thought of Rachel, whom he was to win by his service, he forgot all about the trying work that he had to perform. It was altogether different now. Whatever work he might be doing, he had to say to himself, "If Laban had been honest with me, and not deceived me so shamefully, I would not have to continue to work like a slave, without receiving any wages". With such thoughts passing through his mind, it was hard for him to stay at his work and not to become embittered. And we must not forget that this lasted for seven years. It meant that he was spending the best years of his life in toiling for other peoples' benefit. Besides, there were troubles in the house of Jacob. While Leah gave birth to one son after another, Rachel, his favorite wife, for many years did not bear him any children, and this grieved him very much. You see, children, thus Jacob was to learn the third lesson in God's school. While he had to work

without wages, and while his domestic cares were burdening his heart, he was to learn to trust in God without reserve, and firmly to believe that He would care for him. This again is a lesson that one does not learn at a single trial. One must ever anew go to God's school and be taught by His good Spirit before the lesson is learned that one must cast all his cares upon God, and that He will not forsake those who trust in Him. In order to make it easier for Jacob to learn this lesson, God finally began to bless him beyond measure. For when the second seven years were over, and Jacob could have become his own lord, Laban said to him, "Stay with me still longer; my herds have never increased as they do under your care; from now on I will gladly pay you for your service; only tell me what wages you demand". After spending fourteen years with Laban, Jacob would have preferred to return to his home in Canaan, so that he might see his mother again. But was he to come back to his home with empty hands? As yet, there was nothing that he could have called his own. He would not even have had camels upon which to seat his wives and children as he started out for home. Under these circumstances he welcomed Laban's offer, and said to him, "I will stay with you if you will agree to give me all the sheep, calves and goats that are born with spots". Laban agreed to this most readily. For he said to himself, "In this deal I will surely be the winner. Here in this country where the herds are constantly outside, and exposed to the bright sunlight, it is almost an exception that a spotted lamb makes its appearance". But, behold, Laban had reckoned falsely. God so ordained it that by far the greater number of sheep and calves were born spotted. Laban could not explain this to himself, but he said to Jacob, "In the new year there must be a change made. All the animals that are born spotted shall belong to me, and those that are single-colored shall be yours". But this again was no advantage to Laban. For now most of the calves and lambs that were born were single-col-

ored. Laban continued thus to change Jacob's wages ten times, but it proved to be of no avail. Each time the color of the new-born sheep and cattle was in Jacob's favor. Notice, children, that God was back of all this. It is true, Jacob also used all kinds of shepherd-tricks; but it was not because of his cunning that his flocks increased, it was by the hand of God, the hand that regulates all things in the world, both the great and the small. God saw that Jacob had already learned many a lesson in His school, and so He wanted to bless him, in order that he might learn especially the difficult lesson, that from his heart one must trust in God, and not doubt in the least that He is able to bless a man even when his fellow-men try to keep him down. By the blessing of God Jacob grew richer in six years than he would have become by twenty years of his own toil. The number of his sheep, cattle and goats increased to such an extent that Laban's sons grew envious of him, and finally lied about him, saying to everybody, "Jacob has taken away all of our father's herds; what he now calls his own should by right belong to us". These were unjust words, and they hurt Jacob. He also noticed that Laban himself had for some time ceased to be friendly toward him. So Jacob grew weary of his life in Mesopotamia and began to long for his home in Canaan, where he could at least be his own master.

God read this wish in Jacob's heart, and said to him, "Yes, return to the land of thy fathers, I will be with thee". Then Jacob should have gone to Laban and told him about this matter openly. But to do this, he was afraid. He feared Laban would not let him go, or might keep back his herds and his children. So he sent for Leah and Rachel, and called them out to the fields, where he was staying with the herds. They were to bring the children along, too. By this time Jacob had eleven sons, one of whom was born to him by Rachel. Laban just then happened to be far away with a herd of sheep that were to be shorn, so Jacob thought it would

be a good chance for him to escape with his family and all his herds. We see that Jacob even now had not yet fully learned the main lesson in God's school; he still relied, in a measure, upon his own prudence, instead of trusting in God alone. But his prudence did not take him far this time either. For after he had been on his way three days, Laban heard that he had secretly left him. Gathering his sons and servants, he had them mount swift camels, and with them started out in pursuit of his departing nephew. Jacob could not travel fast with his flocks, so Laban soon overtook him. What was Jacob to do now? Did not Laban have a right to find fault with his secret flight? But here God once again helped him out of his difficulty. In the night before Laban reached Jacob, God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Take heed that thou speak to Jacob no unkind word". So Laban peacefully took leave of his daughters and of his nephew, Jacob. He and Jacob also made a covenant with each other, agreeing ever to remain good friends. How Jacob was thereby put to shame in the presence of God, who had righted Jacob's wrongs, and built a wall of protection around him and his family! By his prudence Jacob had gotten himself into the greatest danger, and God had rescued him from it by only a single word. Why? Jacob was to learn the main lesson in God's school, namely, to trust in God alone and not to doubt in the least that He would lead everything to a good end. How often God had to renew His efforts to teach Jacob this lesson! He was bound that Jacob should learn it better right along and taught it to him so often that he might never forget it. This shows you how patient God is in teaching those whom He takes into His school. He did not lose patience with Jacob for showing himself so unapt to learn. He ever tried again if He did not succeed in teaching him that one important lesson. This time, after Laban had left Jacob and returned home, God opened Jacob's eyes, so that he saw the angels of God, who had accompanied him,

though unseen. It was as if God wanted to say to him, "Fear not, Jacob, thou art not alone; I have given my angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways, to bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Wilt thou not at last believe that all depends upon Me, wilt thou not at last let Me have sway and trust in Me with all thy heart?"

The nearer Jacob now drew to the borders of Canaan, the more he had to think of Esau. He would say to himself, "I wonder if Esau is still mad at me because I, twenty years ago, cheated him out of the blessing of Isaac, our father? What if he should come and take away all that I have, and put me to death?" This time, however, he acted openly; he sent messengers ahead of him to Esau, that they might announce to him the arrival of his brother out of Mesopotamia. By the answer that the messengers brought back from Esau Jacob hoped to be able to tell how his brother felt toward him. The messengers did not return with an encouraging word from Esau; for they said, "Esau is coming to meet you with four hundred men". That sounded rather ominous. Jacob divined nothing good from this report. But take notice of his behavior. It is quite different from what it had been on former occasions. To be sure, he became scared and his heart began to thump violently. Then he also divided his herd into two parts and had them travel on different roads; for he thought, "If Esau should destroy the one part, the other may escape". But his chief concern was to pray to God in his distress. To Him he looked for help. Said he, "O Lord, I am not worthy of the least of all the loving kindness, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two companies. Deliver me from the hand of my brother Esau". This prayer must have pleased God, for it was marked by great humility. "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy loving kindness,"—these

words bear no evidence of any inclination on Jacob's part to depend upon his own prudence, he only speaks of God's mercy, to which he owes everything, and of His truth, according to which He had kept the promise given him in that wonderful dream. Do you see how he has been freed from all false self-regard, and how he gives God credit for everything and looks to Him alone for help in this hour of danger? This was indeed a different Jacob than the one who some years ago started out for Haran. Not in vain had God taken him into His school; it took a long time, but finally he had learned his lesson.

But when one has learned his lesson, then comes the examination, in which it must appear whether one really knows it. This examination was given to Jacob the very next night. In the evening, after he had taken from the herd valuable presents for Esau, and brought all his possessions across the river Jabbok, he returned alone, most likely to pour out his heart to God in prayer. Then and there it happened that a man wrestled with him. Jacob did not know who it was that placed himself in his way. However, he showed himself courageous; who was there that could harm him now, when he knew that he had God on his side? And the man could not prevail against him. At daybreak the man touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, so that he could wrestle no longer. Then he wanted to go and told Jacob to loosen his hold on him. But meanwhile Jacob had noticed that it was God Himself who in the form of a man had blocked his way. This made him all the less willing to let go of Him, and he said, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me". Behold, the new Jacob who would be nothing of himself, but built only upon God's blessing! This had been the examination. God had placed Himself in Jacob's way, in order to see whether he, with full trust in God, would take up the fight and see it through. And Jacob had passed the examination. He had entered the combat and held out to the very

last. Now God could change his name. No longer was he to be called Jacob, the cunning man, but his name was to be Israel, which means a man who wrestles with God; for he had striven with God and with men, and had prevailed. So Jacob had undergone a complete change. Unable to do anything himself, he desired nothing now but God's blessing.

One who has passed his examination well is often given a prize. In the case of Jacob the prize was not lacking. For God changed the mind of his brother Esau, so that on the next day he met him in the most friendly way and forgave him everything. Yes, they embraced and kissed each other. At this the angels must have rejoiced, but Jacob must have thanked God most heartily for having done all things well. Now he could go on his way rejoicing, and live in the land of his fathers in peace. His mother, it would seem, was not living any more, but his father, Isaac, was still alive. How glad he must have been to have his son with him again before his eyelids closed in death! It reassured him that through Jacob and his descendants the blessing would come upon all nations.

You have thus seen, children, how God took Jacob into His school. He taught him many a lesson there; the main one was this, that human prudence counts for naught, but all depends upon God's blessing, and that for this reason one must not think it necessary to help God along with His plans, that it is the best thing to let God alone hold sway and have the confidence in Him that He will at all times do all things well. Children, the time is coming when God will also take you into His school, in order that you may learn this lesson. It is the main lesson in life. And when at the moment of death the examination is held and God finds that you trust only in Him and His grace, then you will have passed the examination and up yonder God will, out of pure grace, award the prize of eternal life. Shall we all obtain it?

37. Of Joseph, the Most Favored of Jacob's Sons.

From Mesopotamia Jacob had returned to his home in Canaan. He was no longer the old, crafty Jacob who imagined he could effect most anything by his own prudence; he was a new Jacob who had been in God's training and learned to trust in Him without reserve. This change of heart and life made him acceptable to God. It also made him more like his father Isaac and still more like his grandfather Abraham, both of whom were distinguished from men round about them by their firm trust in God's unlimited power and grace. To this firm trust and living faith Jacob had now been trained. He was, therefore, fit to be the one in whom and in whose descendants all the nations were to be blessed. Before God had taken him into His school, he lacked this fitness. For you must know, children, that not until God has trained a man to trust in His grace can He use him for anything great in His kingdom. As long as we continue to rely upon our own prudence, He can make no use of us. The eyes of the Lord ever look upon faith.

Of course, even now Jacob was not yet a perfect saint in whom God found nothing to correct. In fact, there are no such saints here on earth. God still had to retain His hold on Jacob, so that he might remain steadfast in the faith and increase in it more and more. And if Jacob himself was not perfect by any means, much less can this be said of his family. While he had been awakened to a living faith, his family was not entirely free from heathen ways. His wives knew the living God, yet they had not fully given up their idols. Rachel, in particular, remained attached to them and upon various occasions invoked their help. The numerous servants whom Jacob had brought with him from Mesopotamia knew even less of the true God, and had very little, if any, faith in His power and grace. Then, too, there was much envy and strife between Rachel and Leah. No wonder that

under such conditions the children of Jacob did not lead a life that was beyond reproach. In many things they acted like the heathen among whom they dwelt. There was very little evidence of that faith and piety by which they should have distinguished themselves from the people living round about them. At times, some of them even acted worse than the heathen.

This made it necessary for God to do something very special, in order that Jacob's faith might become still more firm, and that his family might not finally come to be like their neighbors. We know for what purpose God took Abraham out of his heathen surroundings. He was to become the father of a people that should know the living God, believe in Him and love Him with all their heart. From this chosen people the Savior was at last to be descended, as the One through whom the blessing was to come upon all the nations of the earth. This could not have occurred if Jacob's family had again turned heathen in thought and conduct. God, therefore, had to do something special to prevent this. And He did it, too. He took Jacob and his family entirely out of Canaan and led them down to Egypt (map!), that they might live wholly apart from all heathen tribes. The man, however, through whom He did this was **Joseph, the most favored of Jacob's sons.** I shall, therefore, tell you about Joseph today and on the Sundays following. If you pay good attention, you will soon form a liking for Joseph, and if God lends you His blessing, you will also begin to become like that most favored among the sons of Jacob.

At Bethel Jacob had built an altar and made an offering to God thereon, as he had vowed he would when he awoke from that remarkable dream. From Bethel he had journeyed southward again and pitched his tents near the city of Hebron (map!). Here he then continued to live for a number of years. Here he found his aged father Isaac and for some time dwelt together with him. Here he also buried

him when he had died at the age of 180 years. For the cave of Machpelah in which Abraham, Sarah and probably Rebekah had already been buried, and in which Isaac was now also to find his resting place, was located near Hebron. From the vicinity of Hebron the shepherds of Jacob often took the herds far out into the country round about. How large these herds were, you can imagine when you recall that Jacob on his way home from Mesopotamia chose from them 580 cattle, sheep and goats as gifts for Esau, and that even then he had two large droves left. And now the herds of Isaac had been added to them. So Jacob's herds must have contained thousands and thousands of cattle, sheep and other kinds of domestic animals. His 10 oldest sons were the chief shepherds, for they had all grown up to the stature of men. They were named Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphthali, Gad, Asher, Issachar and Zebulun. They had grown up with the herds and understood their work as shepherds most thoroughly.

At home with their father were two more sons, Joseph and Benjamin. They were still too young for their father to let them go away with their brothers and the herds, sometimes to remain absent for weeks. Benjamin was but a few years old, and Joseph was also much younger than his brothers. Besides, these two were the only sons born by Rachel. When Benjamin was born, Rachel died. Thus it came about that Jacob bestowed all the love which he had in his heart for Rachel upon Joseph and Benjamin. They were a great comfort to him in his declining years, and he cared for them most tenderly. He may have admitted to himself that formerly he had been too much concerned about his own and Laban's herds and that the training of his older children had thereby come to be somewhat neglected. Even today it sometimes happens that parents are kept so busy as to have very little time left for their children.

Jacob became especially attached to Joseph. Benjamin was still very young and small. Him the father could occasionally take upon his arm and with him play a while, and in the evening pray with and for him; but most of the time the little fellow was in the care of Leah or one of the maid-servants. Joseph, on the contrary, had already reached the age of fifteen years. Him Jacob could have at his side all day, with him he could walk out into the fields, to him he could relate all the things that God had done for him in his life, how He had led Abraham into the land of Canaan and given him the great promise, how He had appeared also to him, the grandson of Abraham, and told him that he was to be the one from whose descendants the Savior of all nations would come forth. One thing Jacob told Joseph over and over again, so as to impress it most deeply upon his mind. He would not tire saying to him, "Joseph, trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean upon your own understanding". For that was the lesson at which he himself had to study so hard and so long in God's school; Joseph was to take this lesson with him into life, as a precious jewel. And Joseph was an apt pupil. He had a keen mind. Learning was a pleasure to him, and his eyes fairly shone when he had answered a hard question correctly. Joseph's zeal, in turn, would be an inducement to his father ever to give him new and harder problems to work out. But Joseph was not only keen-minded; he also had a pious heart. It was not in vain that his father had told him of God's faithfulness, of His unlimited power and grace; it was not in vain that he had said to him time and again, "God may let one wait a long while before He helps him; for fourteen years He left me all alone in a strange land, as if He had entirely forgotten me; but then He suddenly began to bless me as only the Almighty can bless. He said that He would bring me home again in peace, and He did so". To all these sayings of his father Joseph not only lent a most attentive ear,

but he also kept them in a good and honest heart. Thus the two, father and son, grew to each other and into each other, until they were inseparable. Where the one was, there the other also could be found. I would not be at all surprised if Jacob had sometimes thought within himself, "Joseph shall be the master in my house one of these days; before I die, I will give him the blessing of the firstborn". His ten brothers were, of course, much older than he; but they were not born to Jacob by Rachel; Joseph was her firstborn son.

When Joseph was 17 years old, his father sent him out with his brothers to herd the flocks. No doubt, he would have preferred to keep him at home with himself, but it was necessary for Joseph to learn all about the work of shepherds, if he was some day to become a real cattle king and take the place of his father. So he was ordered to help several of his brothers at their work, until later he would be able to work independently. This meant a great change in the life of Joseph. At first he may have looked forward with joy to the time when he was to be outside with the herds, much as he would have been pleased to stay with his father; but when it came to being with his brothers day after day, he could not help noticing how rough and uncouth they were. They dealt roughly with the herds and roughly with one another. They took delight in torturing the animals, and among themselves they cursed and cussed to such an extent that Joseph began to feel very uncomfortable in their midst. Such distorted faces as they would have when they swore at each other Joseph had never seen before, and such ugly talk had never before reached his ear. At times he saw them doing even worse things, some of them so bad that he would turn his eyes away in shame; for his pure soul could not bear the sight of them. His brothers did things whereby they disgraced their father and gave him a bad name among his neighbors.

How glad Joseph was when the first few weeks were

over and he could be at home again with his father for a few days!

When his father asked him how things were going, he told him frankly what he had seen and heard. His soul was still filled with horror, and he also said to himself, "Father must be told how his sons are acting, or he will not only suffer loss, but people will also begin to talk ill about him. So Joseph was not a tattler and defamer, taking delight in exposing the wickedness of his brothers to their father. No, he felt heartily ashamed to think that they did such things and only told what he could not conceal if he wanted to be true to his brothers and to his father Jacob. His brothers, of course, were not pleased with this at all, since they felt that they were being watched and had to exercise a little self-control, in order to keep within the limits of decency. Their father, however, was grateful for what Joseph had disclosed to him, since he was able now to use his influence in preventing further scandals.

But Jacob now made one great mistake: he had a coat of many colors made for Joseph, that is, a coat which had colored stripes, contained sleeves for the arms, and in long, graceful folds hung down to the ankles. Such coats were at that time worn only by the sons of princes; shepherds were usually clothed in a plain, rough coat without sleeves and extending down no farther than to the knees. Thereby Jacob distinguished his dear son Joseph in the presence of all people, and particularly over against his other sons. That was not likely to have a good effect upon Joseph. It tended to make him proud, and yet we have learned, "A meek and lowly spirit stands high with God above; the proud shall not inherit the kingdom of His love", and the Bible tells us, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble". What Jacob did was not good for Joseph's brothers either. For one time when Joseph had been kept at home by his father, and the other sons returned from the fields, and saw

their brother clad in his coat of many colors, they grew angry at their father for having thus distinguished Joseph, and became envious of their brother because of the distinction that he enjoyed. They thought, "Why should he be treated as if he were better than we? Why should he strut around in his royal garment like a king's son while our bodies are exposed to the sun?" Had Joseph been as rough and uncouth, as impure and low-minded as they were, they would have been less wrought up about this mark of distinction. But since he was pious and pure-minded, and showed a deep dislike for their sinful conduct, they only hated him all the more on account of the preference given him by their father, and did not have another kind word left for Joseph.

An evil time now began in Jacob's house. Instead of obeying their father and doing everything to please him, in accordance with the fourth commandment, his ten sons often showed contempt for him and paid no attention to his words; and instead of living with their brother in peace and concord and rejoicing in his good qualities, they envied him the love of his father and hated him as the spider hates the fly. Yet it is written, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" And again, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God".

The enmity of the brethren toward Joseph became still greater because of several dreams that he had and that he related to them. For one morning he said to his brothers, "I dreamt we were binding sheaves in the field, and my sheaf arose and stood upright, while your sheaves came round about and bowed down before my sheaf". This was indeed a peculiar dream, and Joseph would have done better not to tell it to his brothers, since it was apt to irritate their bad temper anew. Indeed this is just what did happen. Said they to him, "There we have it. This shows what kind of a fellow you are. You always want to be so good and pious, but you are a hypocrite. One can see by your dreams what

kind of thoughts you have in your mind. If you did not cherish such thoughts constantly, you would not dream about them during the night. Some day you want to be our king and rule over us, while we are to bow down to the ground before you, like the sheaves in the field, that you saw in your dream. You can wait a long time before it will come to that, you vain fellow". Soon afterwards Joseph had yet another dream which he also related to his brothers, saying, "I dreamt that the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me". It is indeed noticeable that Joseph's heart was not altogether free from a certain kind of false pride which prompted him to busy his mind with thoughts of his future greatness. Otherwise he would not again have told his dream to his brothers. It seems as if he rather liked to talk about what he was going to be some day. This time he also related his dream to his father. Joseph was bright enough to see that if the dream did not only picture to him eleven stars that bowed down to him, but also the sun and the moon as doing the same thing, his father and his step-mother were included in what he had dreamt. But his father rebuked him for having such thoughts regarding the future and the great role that he would play in it. Jacob perhaps realized, too, that he had not done quite the proper thing by showing him such great partiality, and thus giving rise to such high-flown thoughts in his mind. So he reproached him because of his dreams and said, "What kind of a dream is this? Shall I, your mother, and your brothers come and bow down to you? Thoughts like these you must keep down". Still, Jacob took care to remember this dream; for he himself had dreamt a peculiar dream when on his flight to Mesopotamia, and all that he had seen and heard in that dream had come true. Who could tell whether this dream of Joseph's might not also have a deeper meaning and indicate that God meant to use him for something great? Upon his brothers this dream had an altogether different effect. They hated him still more and grew

so envious of him as if he had already become their king before whom they would have to bow down. That, of course, was entirely wrong of them, and they did evil in the sight of God. If God wishes to make something great out of my brother, it is not for me to grow envious of him, but rather to rejoice in his good fortune. This the brothers of Joseph could not do because each one of them would have preferred to become great himself, while his own conscience told him, "You are not fit for that; if anyone of us is fit to attain to greatness it is Joseph, because he is wise and prudent, good and pious". But they loved things evil and wanted to remain as bad as they were.

So we leave these brothers with the anxious question, "Who knows what their envy toward Joseph may not prompt them to do?" And when we think of Joseph's dreams and thoughts, we are reminded of the lines in a certain hymn:

"For whom to honor Thou intendest,
Him into **valleys low** Thou sendest."

And we ask ourselves, "Will it also be thus with Joseph? Must he likewise be led into "valleys low" before he can ascend to the heights of fame and glory?"

For the time being, children, let your hearts be filled with a wholesome fear as you think of Joseph's brothers and are made to see how envy and hate may destroy the most beautiful family life. Impress upon your memory with indelible letters the words of the 133rd psalm, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity". And if there is anyone among you who has aught against his brother or sister, let him even today banish all envy and all hatred, that the angel of peace may enter his heart and home.

38. How Joseph Was Sold by His Brethren for Twenty Pieces of Silver.

"Who knows what the envy of Joseph's brethren may not prompt them to do?"—that is the question which forced itself upon us the last time, when we were told how the ten brothers of Joseph begrudged him the coat of many colors which his father had given him, and how their anger was increased by his peculiar dreams, which he had uncautiously related to them. And when we learned from Joseph's dreams how he pictured his future to himself in the brightest colors, and was not altogether free from a kind of vanity, we were reminded of the lines in a hymn, "For whom to honor Thou intendest, him into valleys low Thou sendest", and felt inclined to ask, "What may there be in store for Joseph? Is it to be assumed that he also will have to enter into the depths of humiliation before he is led to the heights of honor and glory?" Both of these questions, the one relating to the brothers of Joseph and the one referring to Joseph himself, will be answered by what you shall hear today; for I must tell you: **How Joseph Was, by His Wicked Brethren, Sold into Slavery for Twenty Pieces of Silver.**

You remember that Jacob, like his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham, was a great cattle king, having hundreds of man-servants and maid-servants, and so many thousands of sheep, cattle and camels that he himself did not know how many of them he called his own. His ten oldest sons were often away from home with the servants and with the herds, taking them from one grazing place to another. For sometimes they did not return home for months but simply changed their location as often as it seemed necessary, without taking the herds home first. Once they were herding the flocks in the region of Shechem and Dothan (map!), while their father was living near the city of Hebron (map!). So they were far away from their father's tent, since the

distance between Hebron and Shechem is about equal to that between Dubuque and Waterloo. It took fully twenty five hours to travel from Hebron to Shechem, and thirty hours were needed to go from Hebron to Dothan. No wonder that Jacob very rarely heard of his sons, and that he felt prompted to make inquiries about them. In doing this, he made use of his son Joseph, whom he had been keeping at home again. One day he said to him, "Go and see whether it be well with thy brethren and with the flocks." During their long absence something might have happened to one or the other of his sons, or some disease might have broken out among the flocks. Joseph, being an obedient son, started out on his way at once.

He had no forebodings of any evil that might befall him. While he had noticed that his brothers were even more unfriendly toward him because of his dreams than they had been before, he had given the matter no further thought. One who himself bears others no ill, takes it for granted that others will act the same toward him. Since Joseph had a forgiving heart, he did not think that his brothers would continue to cherish any ill feeling toward him. Their trouble, so far as he was concerned, was both forgiven and forgotten. He even was glad at the thought of seeing his brothers, the servants and the herds again. His joy was all the greater when he finally came to them, because on the long way he had become lost and for a time could discover no trace of his brothers. But Joseph was to make the discovery that they were quite differently disposed toward him than he toward them. They had not forgotten anything; they still thought of the partiality that Jacob showed his son Joseph, of the princely gown that he had presented to him, of the peculiar dreams which Joseph had dreamt and related to them, dreams that seemed to foreshadow their becoming his humble servants. And when they reflected on these things, feelings of envy would be roused in their hearts, and their hatred for

Joseph fairly looked out of their eyes when they talked about him, and the one or the other may have said to himself, "Just wait, you spoiled child, we shall yet have a chance to take some of the conceit out of you."

So when the brethren suddenly saw Joseph coming, all the envy and hatred and spite that they harbored toward him broke forth in words of scorn and mockery. They called out, "Behold, this dreamer cometh". Some of them added, "Let us slay him and cast him into a pit; then we will see what will become of his dreams". It was a terrible thought, not only to kill their own brother, but to cast his corpse into a pit where no one might find it. Satan himself must have put that thought into their minds, for it was black as hell. And yet, the rest were already consenting to the idea of putting Joseph to death. It was the surest way of silencing the unpleasant monitor, so that he might no longer be able to report their wicked deeds to their father. Only on one point they had not quite cleared their minds. How were they to explain to their poor father the disappearance of his son? But soon they also had found an answer to this question. "Let us say, 'An evil beast has devoured him,'" they exclaimed. Thus the bloody plan was formed. They had no consideration for Joseph, their brother, whose right to life they could not deny; they hardened their hearts when they thought of their father and of his great anguish; the matter was settled, Joseph was to suffer death at their own hands. "Let us slay him and cast him into a pit and say, 'A raven beast has devoured him,'"—such is their devilish counsel.

Was there really no one among the ten brethren whose conscience prompted him to plead the cause of his brother? Was there not one to act upon the saying, "Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction?" Yes, one there was who raised his finger, who spoke up for Joseph and warned his brothers. It was Reuben, the oldest of the brethren. But openly and completely to

resist their dark counsel, he lacked the courage. So he thought of a trick by which his brother might be saved. Said he to himself, "I will let them cast Joseph into the empty pit alive; later, when my brothers have gone away, I will pull him out of the pit and take him back to his father." He therefore said to his brothers, in a loud tone of voice, "No, this will never do, you must not kill Joseph; for he is our brother, and it will be too great a sin to take a brother's life. Let us cast him into the pit alive; after he has been in there a good while he will have lost the greater share of his vanity, and the next time he will think twice before he reports anything about us to his father. In this way our hands will at least not be stained with blood." The brethren finally contented themselves with this plan.

Meanwhile Joseph was advancing toward them. As soon as he had come near enough, they seized him, tore the coat of many colors from his body, and threw him into the pit. Before poor Joseph really knew what was happening to him, he lay in the depth. It was a cistern, narrow at the top and wide at the bottom, into which they used to gather water during the rainy season, so that when the dry season came, there might be something to drink for man and beast. Just at that time, the cistern was empty, but what thoughts must have passed through Joseph's mind when he began to realize that he was at the bottom of a deep cistern, and that his own brothers had cast him into it! He had only come to see how they were getting along, he had walked for twenty five or thirty hours, glad at the thought of seeing them again, and this was the reception which they gave him! Who knew how long they might let him famish in the pit, who could tell if they would ever allow him to return to his father? He may have given the brethren the best of words begging them to pull him out of his prospective grave; but at all his pleading their hearts remained as hard as stone. Reuben, having accomplished his will for the time

being, withdrew from the rest, and the others only mocked Joseph when he so pitifully cried to them out of the depth. Yes, they even sat around the edge of the pit, began to eat their luncheon, cracked jokes and laughed rudely, while their brother in the pit below was not only suffering hunger after his long journey, but felt as if his very heart would break, when he thought of his fate.

While they were still sitting there and eating, they saw a troop of people passing at some distance. They were merchants, seated on camels, and on their way to Egypt. For Shechem, where Joseph's brethren were staying at the time, was situated near the great mercantile highway which led from Damascus (map!) across the Jordan, through Canaan, down to the land of the Nile. These merchants were Ishmaelites, that is, descendants of Ishmael, the son of Hagar, Abraham's maid-servant. They generally dealt in figs, dates, balsam and myrrh, that is, precious aromatic herbs; but occasionally they also took human beings with them to Egypt and sold them there at the slave-market, much as cattle are sold. These dealers were passing by. When the brethren saw them, one of their number, Judah, conceived a terrible thought: "We could sell Joseph to these merchants; in this way he would stay alive, and yet be forever banished from our sight." So he said to the others, "Come, let us sell Joseph to these Ishmaelites, rather than let him starve in the pit; for he is after all our brother." The rest were quite agreed. They had but reluctantly consented to Reuben's plan, because they hated Joseph so intensely that they did not want to see him any more; but Judah's plan at once had their full approval. If they would sell Joseph to those merchants, he would disappear forever, and they would not have shed any blood. They did not stop to think that life-long slavery is worse than death; at least, they did not want to think about this, nor did they want to reflect on the fact that by selling Joseph they were becoming murderers after

all; for one who hates his brother and tries to get rid of him is branded as a murderer by the word of God, even though he may not actually spill his brother's blood. And the plan that promised to rid them forever of Joseph found favor in their sight. Perhaps they applauded the plan all the more because it promised to bring them money, so that in disposing of Joseph they would also be doing a good business.

And really, they beckoned the merchants to come to them, offered Joseph to them for sale, and finally agreed to accept 20 pieces of silver for him. In our coin that was about $12. For such a paltry sum they sold their brother! How could they do it! One would think their consciences would have cried out against such a transaction! But no, Judah holds out his hand to receive the 20 pieces of silver, even watching closely to see that the merchants do not keep back a single piece of the tainted money. (Picture!) Meanwhile the others let a rope down into the pit and pulled Joseph out. He may have thought that he was to be rescued; for as yet he had not heard of the sale that had been in progress. But who can imagine the look in his eyes when the merchants grabbed him and dragged him away with violence! He knew that he was being led away into slavery, away from his father and his home, to become the property of strangers who would not regard him much more highly than an ordinarily useful animal. How pleadingly he must have looked at his brothers, how eloquently he must have begged them not to inflict such a thing upon him, since it would break his heart if he should never see his beloved father again. Indeed, his brothers beheld the agony of his soul; but they hardened their hearts to his pleading eyes and eloquent words. Perhaps they even said to him, "Away with thee; we are glad to think that we shall never see thee again; and we shall no longer worry about thy dreams." Surely, children, "where there is envying and strife, there

is confusion and every evil work." Out of their envy grew hatred, and in their hatred they did not want to look at their brother any more, so that they sold him into slavery.

But what were they to do about Jacob, their father? This question agitated Reuben, in particular, when he came back and heard of the sale. Out of sheer horror he tore his coat and exclaimed, "The lad is not there; and I, whither shall I go? Me, the oldest of his sons, will my father hold responsible; how shall I give an acccount of myself?" What his brothers had done with Joseph, and his own conscience, combined to make Reuben almost beside himself. He had to admit that if he had protested more vigorously and been more courageous in the attempt to spare his brother, the calamity could have been avoided. So the brethren held counsel, in order to decide what they might do to make their Father believe that Joseph was dead, and yet, that they were altogether innocent in the matter. It made no difference to them whether they told one big lie more or less, as long as they could accomplish their purpose and cover up their crime. Here again we are enabled to see the truth of the words, "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." For lying certainly must be classed with works that are evil. The sons of Jacob indeed found a means to accomplish their base end, a means develishly shrewd and develishly cruel at the same time. To deceive their poor father, they took Joseph's coat, dipped it into the blood of a slain goat and sent it to their father, with the message, "See whether or not it is thy son's coat." The bloody coat did not give rise to any thought of the brother's guilt; but every blood-stain on the coat nevertheless seemed to call out, "Dead, dead; Joseph is not alive anymore!" And what must the poor father have suffered at the thought that his so intimately loved son had been cruelly torn to pieces by some wild beast! Was it not enough to break his very heart?

But that was a matter of no concern to the brethren; coldly and heartlessly they send their father the message, "See whether or not it is **thy son's** coat." It is as if they did not even want to recognize the dead man as their brother, as if with their coldness they desired to give the bleeding heart of their father an extra thrust. Do you not notice that every evil work proceeds from a heart filled with envy and hatred? Jacob recognized the coat and exclaimed, "It is my son's coat; an evil beast has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces". And out of sheer agony Jacob rent his clothes, as people in the east were in the habit of doing when anything very calamitous had befallen them. As a sign of his great sorrow, Jacob also put a sackcloth around his body, and he mourned for his son a long time. When his sons saw how deeply their father had been grieved, something like remorse must have asserted itself in their hearts, for they tried to comfort him. But even their words of comfort were nothing but miserable lies, since they were careful not to betray themselves. Nor would their father be comforted. There is a sort of pain which can not be alleviated by words, in the presence of which it is better to sit down quietly beside the sorrowing person and silently to press his hand. Jacob only desired one thing: to die and be with his son.

Behold, such nameless woe is caused by envy; where one opens his heart to this monster, it leads to strife and contention, it gives the death blow to love, it makes the heart cold and cruel, it leads on to the telling of lies and to actions that are worse than murder and manslaughter. Therefore, children, beware of envy! It made Cain slay his brother and prompted the sons of Jacob to sell their brother Joseph into slavery. So if envy tries to enter your hearts and become enthroned there, pray most fervently, "O Savior, make me pure within, and let my heart be closed to sin; drive ev'ry evil thought away, that none upon my soul may prey". Prayed

in real earnest, this prayer is the best antidote for envy. Use it diligently, and you will find out how wonderfully effective it is.

39. How Joseph Was Humbled to the Extent of Being Cast Into Prison.

Sold by his faithless brethren to the Ishmaelites and by these merchantmen violently led away to Egypt,—this was the last that we heard of Joseph. We still see him struggling to get away from those cruel slavedealers and back to his brothers, the servants and the herds; but his attempts in that direction are quite in vain, he is held fast with a strong hand, perhaps even tied to one of the camels, so that he may not free himself and in some unwatched moment secretly run away. Indeed, the sun grew continuously warmer, and walking became increasingly harder, but he could not lag behind, he had to keep step with the camel. This was no pleasant task, to be sure. But what hurt Joseph far more was the thought of his brethren, how they could be so treacherous and wicked; and he became completely disheartened in thinking of his aged father. He loved him so dearly, and yet he was to be separated from him forever. How his father will wait for him day after day! How he will send out servants to look for him! How grieved he will be if they do not find him! His father will then mourn for him as if he were dead. The mercantile highway down to Egypt led by Hebron, where his father was living (map!). It may be that Joseph could see the tents at a distance. But he could not go over to them, he was compelled to keep on walking farther to the south, farther into territory unknown to him. He probably cried when he reflected on his unhappy lot, especially at night, when the rough merchants could not see and laugh at his tears. But Joseph was a devout young man and from his farther had learned to pray. No doubt,

Jacob had often told him how he in his youth had to flee before Esau, and how God had appeared to him on his way, saying, "Fear not, I will be with thee, and will lead thee safely home again." When Joseph thought of this, he prayed to the same God and said, "Be Thou with me, and all will yet turn out well." This made his heart firm and strong; for, children, there is nothing that can so comfort and strengthen the heart as honest prayer and a sure confidence in God's presence, a trustful belief in His help.

"If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
And hope in Him through all thy ways,
He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days;
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the rock that naught can move."

Now, **what was Joseph to experience in Egypt?** That is what you want to hear about today, and just that is what I am going to tell you.

The farther those merchants moved toward the south, the more desolate the country appeared. There were but very few trees, and in places nothing was to be seen in the line of vegetation but short bushes along the wayside. For between Palestine, where Jacob lived, and Egypt, the destination of those merchants, (map!), the land is for the most part a desert, where things grow but very sparingly. At last the caravan arrived in Egypt. The merchants wended their way farther into the land; for they wanted to go to the capital city, where the king of Egypt had his abode. Here they would be most liable to sell their goods and get the best prices for them. It happened, just when they reached the city, that slaves were being sold in the public market-place. This was a much larger one than ours over there near the city hall, which is open every Saturday during the summer.

It must have occupied a space equal to several of our city blocks taken together. There people from all lands came to sell their wares: almonds and dates and myrrh, cloth for all kinds of dresses and suits, golden and silver jewelry, precious stones and costly pearls. In one place there were also human beings for sale; men and women, boys and girls were sold like so many head of cattle. It was the slave-market. There one could witness scenes similar to those of which you have read in Uncle Tom's Cabin. There was bartering and dickering, back and forth, until the highest bidder secured the living ware. Right in the midst of those who were being sold stood Joseph. He opened his eyes widely, for a slave-market he had never seen before. But while he saw to his horror how here a human being was sold, and there another, his own turn came. An elderly man, accompanied by a servant, walked up to him. All others stepped aside and made room for him; for this was Potiphar (what was his name?), one of the highest officers of the Egyptian king. He examined Joseph very closely, from top to bottom, and must have been well pleased with him; for Potiphar turned at once to the man who was selling the slaves. Joseph did not understand what he and Potiphar spoke together, for they conversed in the Egyptian language, which Joseph had not yet learned to know. But he saw Potiphar give the other man a number of gold and silver coins, a great many more than those merchants had given his brothers, and so he became aware of the fact that Potiphar had bought him as a slave. O how this pained him! He, the favored son of the rich cattle king Jacob, was sold for money, just as his father used to sell sheep and cattle. But he did not have much time for reflection. For already he had to follow Potiphar, and the servant saw to it that he could not effect his escape. Thus Joseph had become a slave in Potiphar's house.

His was a bitter service. Potiphar lived in a large house, surrounded by a wide yard and numerous gardens; back of

these were spacious stables containing many horses, wagons and chariots, with all the necessary equipment. There were any number of slaves, Joseph being one among them, and they all had to work in the gardens and in the stables, in the yard and out in the fields. Everywhere overseers were stationed, with whips in their hands. They used these whips, too, striking those who did not work diligently or quickly enough on the bare back. The chief overseer was the one to whom all were responsible. It was work, work, work all day, from early in the morning till late at night. Joseph also had to learn to work with his hands. At home the servants stood ready to obey his orders, now he was himself a servant, having to serve without interruption. When night came, after a long day of service, Joseph would be so tired that he sank down upon his matress all exhausted, and still could not sleep. Then he would think of his God and pray to Him, saying, "Do Thou not forsake me, but stay with me, or I shall perish in my misery."

And God was with Joseph. For since Joseph worked so diligently, day after day, and was as much concerned about the property of his master as if it had been his own, since he obeyed his new master as if he had learned the fourth commandment and wanted to keep it to perfection, since he was faithful also in small things, as if God himself stood back of him and watched his every act, his overseer soon began to see that he could depend upon him, was exceedingly well pleased with his work, and occasionally made things a little easier for him. Then, since Joseph kept right on serving in this faithful and conscientious way, one day after another, week in and week out, the chief overseer also took notice of him, and it gave him pleasure to see Joseph so faithful in the discharge of his duties. Faithfulness and trustworthiness win the hearts of all men, and God, too, directs human hearts like the courses of the water-brooks. At last Potiphar himself fixed his attention upon Joseph, because

he had never before owned such a faithful slave. For this reason he was also more friendly toward Joseph than toward his other slaves, in fact, he distinguished him from them and made him their overseer. After Joseph had sufficiently mastered the Egyptian language, and because he was a talented young man this did not take him long, Potiphar made him the chief overseer, to whom all the other slaves were responsible. Potiphar would not have anyone else but Joseph to make his bed for him, to help him dress and undress himself, to accompany him on the street, to wait on him and his wife at table. And what Joseph ordered the other servants to do out in the yard and in the gardens had to be done. Had, then, not God been with him? And as Joseph gradually came to supervise everything in Potiphar's house, God blessed this house abundantly. For Joseph's sake He blessed Potiphar, the heathen. Never before had his fields yielded such abundant crops, never before had his herds been so healthy and multiplied so greatly, never before had his wealth grown so perceptibly, even among the slaves there was greater harmony, and the man-servants and maid-servants were more willing than heretofore. Hence, Potiphar himself was no longer concerned about anything. Why should he stay in the house and see to things if Joseph was so faithful and understood everything better than he? So Joseph had things pretty much his own way. He was a slave only in name, in reality he was free and could move about like a master. Some of the slaves no doubt were envious of him and regarded him as an upstart. If they had only kown how to manage it, they would have set a trap for him, to catch him in some fault. But they could discover nothing objectionable in him, and Joseph very likely pretended not to notice their envious glances. He only became all the more careful because they were watching him. Without doubt, he often thanked God on his knees for leading him so kindly. Why Good had brought him to Egypt and allowed him to be made a slave, that he even now

did not understand; but he trusted that God meant it for his best and said to himself, "Hope, O my soul, and be undismayed; God is with thee and will bring everything to a good end."

But Potiphar had a young and beautiful wife, who was rather gay and frivolous. She began to find the young, strong, handsome Joseph more interesting than her aging husband, Potiphar. She saw Joseph every day when he gave orders in the house, when he walked across the yard, or when he supervised the workmen in the garden. The more Potiphar withdrew from the work of overseeing his house and property, the oftener his wife had a chance to see Joseph. Then it happened that a devlish thought arose in her heart: she wanted to prove unfaithful to her husband and put Joseph in his place. Although she was a heathen women, she knew that such a thing was wrong; but this did not trouble her, if she could only put her evil thought into effect and satisfy the wicked desire of her heart. She should have fought it, for she was Potiphar's wife; she should have acted according to the prayer of the psalmist, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me." But that she did not do, she gave no thought to Potiphar, she only thought of Joseph and of winning his favor. She managed to meet him every time he entered the house; she conversed familiarly with him, quite differently than a mistress talks to a servant, even if he has been made overseer of the whole house; with every gesture she betrayed the evil desire that lurked in her heart. What was Joseph to do? Was he to yield to her and do according to her will and desire? At times such a thought arose in his heart, but he suppressed it immediately; for he said to himself, "What would Potiphar say to that, yes, what would God say to it, He who sees and knows everything?" What Potiphar's wife should have done and did not do, that Joseph did, not allowing sin to have any dominion over him. And the more he clung to God and fought sin, the more quiet his heart became and the better he could again be about his work. Potiphar's wife,

sad to say, did not make it easy for him, for she was always after him and ever tried in a new way to fascinate him. The Bible says that she spoke to him enticingly day by day. That made it all the harder for Joseph to resist. To withstand temptation once, is not an uncommon thing, but when it is repeated over and over again, there are but few who will not yield. I imagine that Joseph, under these circumstances, often prayed to God to make him firm and unyielding, and to keep his heart chaste and pure.

One day he again had to go into the house where Potiphar's wife was, and because none of the servants were in the house with her, she became bolder than at other times in her attempt to entice Joseph to commit the grave sin of adultery. What was Joseph to do? What else could he do, if he wanted to remain chaste and pure, but refuse to yield to her insistent proposal? He looked at her firmly and said, "My master, Potiphar, has committed all that he has to my charge; nothing has he kept back from me except thee, because thou art his wife; how, then, could I be so ungrateful as to betray his confidence and be as a husband to thee? If I should do such a thing, he would be justified in driving me out of his house as a scoundrel, or throwing me into the darkest dungeon. No, I can not be so ungrateful and unfaithful to my master. And how should I be able to face the living God, who knows and sees everything, who therefore would also know this my great sin, who has dealt so kindly with me as to place me in this high and responsible position? How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? Ask anything of me, but not this one thing, which I can and will not do." Children, those were brave words. Joseph had proved himself to be a pious young man. He walked in the presence of God and for His sake would not yield to sin. Over this the angels of God must have rejoiced, and we can rejoice over it even today, as we hear about it; for there is nothing more beautiful than to resist sin and stay

on the path of chastity and purity. Potiphar's wife would not content herself even now, however; she caught Joseph by his garment and tried to make him stay with her. Then Joseph, in order to extricate himself, left his garment in her hand and fled out of the room, out of the house, into the yard, only to get away from her. For at no price would he commit the sin to which she tried to entice him. He probably looked up a place where he could be alone, and as he thought of what had occurred, he came to the conclusion that Potiphar's wife would most likely try to take revenge on him, and that evil days might be awaiting him.

In this he was not mistaken. Hardly had Potiphar's wife seen definitely that in the case of Joseph she would not be able to accomplish her will, when she became wild and threw the whole weight of her hatred upon him. Henceforth she had only one thought, to effect Joseph's destruction. With this end in view she quickly called in the man-servants and maid-servants, turned the whole matter around, and said, "Joseph, this Hebrew youth, this stranger, came in and wanted to entice me to sin; here I still hold his garment; he left it in my hands and fled when I would not yield to his proposals, but called for help." Some of the servants may have believed her story, while others were glad that Joseph's hour had struck, because they had been envious of him. So they were at once willing to testify to everything. When Potiphar came home, she repeated the same lie to him. And Potiphar believed her. He grew terribly angry. Without examining the case, as he should have done, without giving Joseph a chance to say a single word in his defence, he gave orders to put him in prison. The order was promptly executed. Potiphar was most likely the chief officer of the prison, and could have Joseph cast into it without going through the form of a trial.

Poor Joseph! What a sudden change! And why? For the only reason that he had refused to commit a grave sin.

Should not God rather have rewarded him for this? Is not doing good supposed to be followed by receiving what is good? Yes, if we do what is good, then good will follow. But, children, not always at once. Sometimes it does not follow until late, very late; in some cases not before one is in heaven. This is a hard lesson. Joseph was to learn it. He was to learn to trust in God, resting assured that he would not be forsaken by Him. He was to act in accordance with the words of the psalmist, "Commit thy ways unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass". In his case were to come true the words of another spalm, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the **end** of that man is peace". As Joseph had feared God above all things, so he was also to trust Him above all things. In order that the time of trial might not be too hard on Joseph, God prospered him even in prison. The light of his hope was not to be blown out. This, then, is what we are to learn of Joseph: Not to sin against God at any price, and though we may have to suffer evil as an immediate consequence, continue to hope in His mercy and in His help. Therefore,

"Give to the winds thy fears,
Hope and be undismayed;
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears,
And shall lift up thy head.
Through waves and clouds and storms
He gently clears the way:
Wait thou His time, so shall thy night
Soon end in joyous day.

40. How Joseph Was Exalted and Made Lord of All Egypt.

We left Joseph in prison. Why had he been put there? Ah, because he was brave and good, because he had kept God's commandment and would not, at any price, yield to

sin. How strange that one should be imprisoned for such a reason! Could God allow that? Would it not have been the proper thing for Him to bring about the imprisonment of Potiphar and his wife, but to effect at once the release of Joseph? Yes, that is the way we are apt to judge, especially if we know nothing about God's thoughts and expect Him ever to make His ways coincide with ours. God, however, says to us foolish people, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways". For, children, this much is certain: Good always begets good; if we fear God and keep His commandments, He will bless and prosper us; but not always right away, often not before years have elapsed, sometimes not until after our death, when He takes us unto Himself in heaven, and, besides, not every time in accordance with our own ideas. But although God may permit His good and devout children to suffer misery, even for a long while, it is beyond a doubt that He never forgets them. Can a mother forget her child? And even if it were possible that a mother should become a raven mother, forgetting her own child, yet God will not forget His own. Did He forget Joseph while he was in prison? We shall hear today **how God did not forget Joseph, but exalted him and made him lord over all Egypt.**

After Joseph had been cast into prison, he very likely did not at once understand the ways of God. He probably said to Him, "O my God, why dost Thou allow this? What have I done but to keep thy commandments? For what other reason am I here in this dungeon?" He may have been on the point of doubting the justice of God and about to despair of Him, all the more, since the contrast between his former position in Potiphar's house and his present condition in prison was so striking. There he had practically been his own master, here he was locked up in a miserable cell, at first perhaps in the darkest and poorest one that was to be found in the whole prison. But the more he thought of his God

and recalled how wonderfully he had thus far led him, how He had indeed permitted him to be sold to Egypt as a slave, but afterwards was with him in Potiphar's house, so that he rose from stage to stage, he regained his trust in God and said to himself, "God can rescue me also from this prison and once more bring me to a position of honor. He once suffered my father to remain in a strange land for many years, as if He had abandoned him altogether, and yet, He blest him at last. He is able to do the same thing with me." It was as if he had heard the words, "Soul, with all thine anguish, wait on the Lord, nor in sorrow languish, He will help afford", or those others, "If thou but suffer God to guide thee, and hope in Him through all thy ways, He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee, and bear thee through the evil days; who trusts in God's unchanging love builds on the rock that naught can move". Thus hope re-entered his soul and he made up his mind even in prison to do everything as if God were visibly near him and watching him. All that lay beyond this he was going to leave to God. But when one bears God in mind constantly, he is diligent, faithful and happy. No wonder then, that the keeper of the prison soon began to take special notice of Joseph. Never before had he seen a prisoner like him, so attentive to his work, so dependable, so willing and so pleasant. Soon he relieved him of his chains, so that he could move about unhampered, made him the overseer of other prisoners, and finally gave him the keys to all the cells, so that Joseph was placed over the entire prison. From now on, Joseph still was not permitted to step outside of the prison, but inside of it he was free and had everything under him. Did that look as if God had forsaken him? Certainly not! Joseph must have realized this, too, and thanked God for being with him also during his imprisonment. In this way he began to hope that some day God would even set him entirely free again. His sentiments were such as are expressed in the beautiful verse,

"Then hope, my feeble spirit, and be thou undismayed: God helps in every trial, and makes thee unafraid. Await God's time with pleasure, then shall thine eyes behold the sun of joy and gladness its brightest beams unfold." And because he had this firm faith, he could also wait, patiently wait; for, to be sure, only he can wait with patience in whose soul hope has found a place.

Once Joseph was made to think that his hope of regaining his liberty would be realized in the near future, that he, as it were, already held the precious gift of freedom in his hand. It happened like this: Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, had been real angry with two of his servants, with his chief butler, that is, the man who had to supply his table with wine, and with the chief baker, this is, the man who had to bake all of his bread, cake and pastery. In his fury he did not stop long to find out which one of the two was really the guilty person, but had them both put in prison. Here they came to be under Joseph's supervision. Joseph was friendly to them, because he knew from his own experience how good it makes one feel to be treated with kindness. So they grew confidential toward him and told him everything. They perhaps related to him how they happened to be cast into prison, only they tried to show that they were quite innocent of the charges brought against them. Especially the chief baker seemed anxious to convince Joseph of his innocence. One morning when Joseph again entered their cell, he found them both looking very sad, quite different than at other times. Joseph felt sorry for them and inquired about the cause of their worriment. They told him that they had both had a dream which made them feel troubled. This may surprise you, children, because you do not let your dreams worry you very much. You have dreams, but you soon forget them. Why trouble your head about a dream?! Yes, that is what you think, but in times gone by people thought differently. They believed that through the medium of dreams the gods

talked to men and foretold their future. And sometimes God did make things known to men by means of a dream, since at that time people did not yet have the whole Bible through which God now talks to us. Joseph was well aware of this, so he said to those two prisoners, "Indeed, dreams are important enough, and one would like to know what they are to tell him about his future affairs; to interpret them correctly or tell what they mean, belongs to God; however, tell me your dreams; it may be that God will explain their meaning to you through me." So the chief butler told Joseph his dream, saying, "In my dream a vine was before me, which had three branches; it budded, blossomed and bore ripe grapes. These I pressed, the juice flowing into Pharaoh's cup, which I then took and put into Pharaoh's hand." Joseph said to him, "The three branches are three days; when these are up, Pharaoh will raise thy head and restore thee to thy place". When the chief baker saw that the dream of his fellow-prisoner had a good meaning, he also related his dream, saying, "I in my dream had three baskets on my head; in the top one there were all kinds of baked things for Pharaoh, and the birds came and ate of them." Joseph said to him, "This is what thy dream means: The three baskets are three days; within three days Pharaoh will raise thy head and hang thee on the gallows." In both cases Joseph's interpretation proved to be correct; for in three days, when the king was celebrating his birthday, he restored the chief butler to his office, but the chief baker he hanged. When the chief butler left the prison, and bade farewell to Joseph, this is what Joseph said to him: "Be kind enough to speak to Pharaoh about me, that I may be taken out of this prison; for I have done nothing to warrant my being kept here." The chief butler gladly promised to do everything that Joseph requested of him. He thought it would be only fair for him to do Joseph this service, because the latter had treated him so kindly. Nor was it asking too much of him to speak to Pharaoh in Joseph's

behalf. The chief butler came in contact with the king every day and often found him in good humor, when it would be an easy matter to get him interested in Joseph's case. And why should the butler doubt that Joseph was innocent, when he himself had been innocently imprisoned? Joseph did not doubt for a minute that the chief butler would plead his cause before the king. In fact, he felt sure that the hour had struck when he was to regain his freedom. He waited till evening came and then said to himself, "Now they are eating supper over there in the king's palace. On this occasion the chief butler will be waiting on the king again for the first time since his release from prison. He will take advantage of this opportunity and speak to the king about me". But no messenger arrived to bring Joseph the good news that Pharaoh had decided to give him his liberty. This was the first disappointment, and many more were to follow. Day after day, week after week passed by, and Joseph received no glad message either from the butler or from the king. Finally he was forced to believe that the butler had forgotten him, and that one can not depend upon men, nor put his trust in human help. This was a very bitter experience for Joseph. Not that he was treated any worse than before, but in spite of the good treatment accorded him he still remained a prisoner, and to be imprisoned is disgraceful. The more one is disposed to take matters seriously, as Joseph did, the more the disgrace hurts him. Was his name to be tainted for ever? Was the world never to know of his innocence? Had his God also forgotten him, like this butler? If that were true, he would have to die in prison. Who else knew him? Who else was there to think of him? And again he said to his soul, " Then hope, my feeble spirit, and be thou undismayed: God helps in every trial, and makes thee unafraid. Await God's time and pleasure, then shall thine eyes behold the sun of joy and gladness its brightest beams unfold! God has not forgotten thee, any more than He forgot my father in the time of

his servitude. God is almighty, He can and will find a way to effect thy release. His way is ever open; He doth on naught depend; His every act spells blessing, His path light without end. His work no man can hinder; His purpose none can stay, since He, to bless His children, Through all doth make a way. 'Tis but a very simple matter for God to alter men's estate, the rich man's wealth like chaff to scatter, and make the poor both rich and great. Our God His wondrous power doth show by raising up and bringing low.'" Children, that is what I call hope. That is what it means to trust in God above all things.

And not in vain did Joseph hope or trust in God. In his case it proved true that "hope maketh not ashamed". God had not forgotten him. He still had to wait two years longer, but then the hour of deliverance came. And do you know how God intervened and helped Joseph? He did it in a most wonderful way, as only He can. He had Pharaoh, that is, the king of Egypt (all the Egyptian kings went by the title of Pharaoh) dream two peculiar dreams. And since, as we have already heard, people in those ancient times believed that the gods foretold the future through the medium of dreams, Pharaoh's dreams caused him to be greatly worried, all the more, because the Nile, the sacred river of the Egyptians, played such an important part in them. He was bound to find out, at any price, what they were meant to tell him about the future. So he sent messengers into all parts of the land, with orders to bring together at his mansion all the magicians and other wise men of Egypt. They had developed the interpretation of dreams into a regular art, and were highly respected by the people. They all appeared before the king, in response to his summons, but they were not able to interpret his dreams. They would have been only too glad to tell the king their meaning, not only because he was so worried about the matter, but also, because they knew that a liberal reward would be given to the one who divined

the meaning of what the king had dreamt. But as [illegible]d time. they bothered their heads about it, this time they [illegible] of one stricken with blindness and utterly unable to help the king. Then, all of a sudden, the butler came running in and said to the king, "I know a man who can explain thy dreams. When thou, O king, wast angry with thy servants, both I and the chief baker were cast into prison. One night we both had a peculiar dream, and there was with us a young Hebrew, who interpreted our dreams correctly; for as he had predicted it, so things came to pass: Pharaoh restored me to office and had the baker hanged." When Pharaoh heard this, he immediately sent for Joseph. So his messenger, it may have been the chief butler himself, rushed to the prison, and as soon as he saw Joseph, he called to him, "Joseph, hurry and get ready, the king wants you to interpret his dreams. No one else is able to explain them, but **you** can do it". Whether he would be the one to explain the king's dream, Joseph could not tell at this time; but that he was all of a sudden asked to appear before the king, and that he was looked for to interpret the king's dreams, for which purpose the magicians and wise men were usually called,—this could not be a mere matter of chance, in this God Himself was most likely concerned. Had the time come for his misery and his disgrace to end? Was God now coming to his release? Was he to be restored to honor? These were most likely the thoughts that shot through his head while he hurriedly had his hair cut, put on the new clothes that were brought to him, and thus got ready to appear before the king in a proper way. Then he was taken over to the king's palace. He had no time to look at the magnificent building, or to marvel at the many servants that were in evidence everywhere, though he noticed in passing that things were carried on there on a much grander scale even than at the house of Potiphar. His soul was busy with other thoughts. He no doubt thought of God and said to Him, "O Lord, help me!

his servant find the true meaning of the king's dreams! And to effect Thy will, give me my freedom and restore me to [illegible]. Before he could realize it, he stood in the presence of Pharaoh, the king.

It was a high and ample room (picture!); from the walls were hanging heavy curtains, into which beautiful pictures had been artistically woven; the floors were covered with costly rugs, so soft that not a footstep could be heard; from the east the fresh light of the morning sun shed its beams into the chamber, in the middle of which the king was seated upon a cushioned chair, raised by three steps somewhat above the level of the floor, to indicate the high office of the king. The king's head rested upon his hand, and one could read in his very features how greatly his dreams worried him. Three of the wise Egyptians were with him, but they had not been able to comfort him, because they could not interpret his dreams. Would Joseph be the one to accomplish this task? Would he find it possible to tell the king what his dreams were meant to foretell? As soon as he, accompanied by an officer, had entered the room, he observed the Egyptian custom and threw himself upon the floor in the presence of the august Pharaoh. The king told him to arise, and then went on to say, "I have had a dream, and there is no one that can interpret it. But I have heard that thou canst understand a dream and give its interpretation." With that humility which always renders unto God all the glory and honor that belongs to Him, Joseph replied, "It is not in me to interpret dreams, but may God give Pharaoh an answer of peace". Pharaoh now related his dreams to Joseph. He said, "In my dream I stood on the brink of the river Nile, and saw seven fat and handsome kine (cows) come up out of the water and feed in the reed-grass. Following these I saw seven lean and ugly kine come up out of the water. They ate up the seven fat and handsome kine, but stayed as lean as they had been before. After this I

awoke, but soon fell asleep again and dreamt a second time. I saw seven well-filled ears of grain grow up out of one stalk. Then I also saw seven withered and empty ears. These seven withered ears swallowed up the seven good, well-filled ears, but remained as withered and empty as before." When Pharaoh had finished, Joseph reflected for a moment, and then a gleam of joy brightened his face, for God had given him the right interpretation of the king's dream. He raised both of his arms, as if he wanted to point into the future, and said, "The two dreams of Pharaoh both mean the same thing; God shows Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven fat kine and the seven good ears are seven years of plenty. The seven lean kine and the seven withered ears are seven years of famine. Behold, seven years of plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt, and after that seven years of famine; then there will be great distress. Now let Pharaoh look for a wise and discreet man and set him over the land of Egypt., and have him take and gather the fifth part of all the grain in the seven years of plenty, so that food may be in store for the seven years of famine." While Joseph was still speaking, Pharaoh's face brightened, he sat up straight in his chair, and when Joseph had ended his discourse, he exclaimed, "Yes, that's it; that is what the dream means. How could it mean anything else? Is not the sacred river Nile the fountain of all our wealth and prosperity here in Egypt? Unless it floods all our fields and meadows in August and September, leaving a deposit of rich ground, filling all our ponds and canals with water for purposes of irrigation, we can not water our fields and nothing will grow. Our good years and our evil years come out of the Nile, as did the fat and the lean cows in my dream. This is all perfectly clear and simple. God Himself must have given thee this interpretation." And the three wise men nodded their heads, as if to say, "Yes, that is true", and were real angry

to think that they had not been able to give this simple explanation themselves.

But the king stepped down from his chair, and said to Joseph, "Since God has shown thee all this, there is no man so discreet and wise as thou; therefore thou shalt be over my house. Behold, I have set thee over all Egypt and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled". Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his own hand and put it on Joseph's. He also arrayed him in vestments of fine linen, and put a golden chain about his neck. Then he made him to ride in the king's chariot, and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!"

Had God, then forgotten Joseph? Was not Joseph right in trusting God so perfectly? Yes, children, God is faithful, He never forgets His own. Though He keeps them waiting, He only does it to put their trust in him to a test. If we but continue in waiting upon Him and retain our piety to the very end, He will help us at last, quickly and in fullest measure. His counsel and His ways are wonderful and past finding out; but they always lead to a good and glorious end. "The Lord of hosts is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." "Our God, whose wondrous works we know, both raiseth up and bringeth low." Though a mother should so far deny her nature as to forget and abandon the child of her bosom, yet will the Lord neither forget nor abandon His own. Think of this, children, when anyone tries to entice you to commit sin, when it happens that you fare poorly, or make rather slow progress because you want to remain honest, devout and chaste. In the end God will have everything turn out right. "We know that all things must work together for good to them that love God". Only be faithful to God and walk according to His commandments. He will see to the rest. He will exalt you in due time.

41. How Joseph's Brethren Came to Egypt for the First Time.

"Through sorrow's vale Thy pathway led
To heaven's joyful plain",

that is what we sing and say with reference to our Savior Jesus Christ. For He had to sink into the depth of death and the grave, so that He seemed to have disappeared once and for all time; but He was led to the most exalted heights when on the third day He rose again from the dead and afterwards ascended into heaven, that He might be Lord over all creatures in heaven and on earth. In this respect, however, Joseph was a true type of Christ. His way also led out of the depths to the most exalted heights. After being degraded to a life in prison, where he was as dead to the world outside, he was raised to the throne of Pharaoh, at whose right hand he sat as the first and highest in the whole land, so that all Egypt had to bow the knee before him. O how Joseph must have thanked his God, who had led him so wonderfully, who had not forgotten or abandoned him, but rather taken him by the hand and raised him to a position of honor and glory. Now he began to understand somewhat the great truth which the apostle Paul later expressed in these familiar words: "We know that all things must work together for good to those who love God." Joseph therefore resolved to show himself grateful to God for all His loving kindness by continuing to remain good and pious after having been made the most honored man in all Egypt. That he carried through this resolution most perfectly and at the king's court, amid a thousand temptations to sin, held fast to his piety and stayed humble instead of becoming puffed up with false pride, this you will have occasion to notice as I proceed to tell you, **How Joseph's brethren came to Egypt for the first time, and how they were treated by him.**

As Joseph had interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, so things came to pass. Egypt experienced a time of unusual wealth and plenty. For seven successive years the waters of the Nile went beyond their banks farther than ever before, so that all the canals which from there led farther into the land, at places spreading out to such an extent as to become regular little lakes, were constantly filled with water, thus making it possible for the farmers to irrigate even the most remote patch of soil. Besides, the heavy deposit which the waters left on the land after receding, added greatly to the richness and fertility of the fields and meadows. Never had the grass stood so high and thick, nor had there ever before been such quantities of hay either brought into the barns or gathered in large heaps out in the fields. But what most delighted the hearts of the farmers in Egypt was the immense crop of wheat that they raised year after year. Even the oldest people could not remember ever having seen wheat so good and plentiful. The grain was so heavy and so well matured when harvest-time came, that they could not but wonder at it. Their sense of wonder was still greater at threshing time, when the golden grains sprang from the hulls, to fill one measure and one bin after another. When the farmers came together, the one would say, "I raised so many bushels of wheat", and the other would answer, "I even raised so many." What a blessing of God was thus spread out over all Egypt! And so it went on for seven years. The people would not have known what to do with all the grain if it had not been for Joseph. For he, at the expense of the government, built large elevators and gave orders to gather in them all superfluous grain, so that nothing might be lost. Some may not have liked that any too well, for there are people who do not care to give up anything even when they have plenty to spare; but the government paid no attention to these grumblers, it kept right on gathering the superfluous wheat, in order that the country might have a sufficient amount of it on hand when

the years of famine came. In the various cities and villages throughout the land one elevator after another was erected and filled with grain; and they took care, too, that these large granaries were dry and airy enough to keep the grain from growing musty. At last there were so many bushels of wheat that they had to stop counting them.

And it was well that this had been done. For after the seven years of plenty came the seven years of famine, just as God had told Pharaoh in a dream, and as Joseph had interpreted it. People had so accustomed themselves to having an abundance of grain, that at first they could hardly imagine how a change for the worse might occur. They had taken it for granted that the times of plenty would continue for ever. But the high water of the Nile did not make its appearance and the canals dried up, even the water in the small lakes grew less right along. Instead of fertility, drouth and barrenness came out of the Nile this time, and slowly but surely crept over the entire land. In the first year wheat still sprang up, but it grew very poorly, and since there was no rain, whereas the heat of the sun became more intense every day, the grass and the grain in the fields withered away. The people then fell back upon what little they had left from former crops, but sooner than they could realize it, their supply was exhausted. Slowly but inevitably distress became the lot of both man and beast. The poor were the first to suffer, but by and by the rich also were in want. They had enough money, but what good did that do them, if there was no food to be had in the markets? When things had arrived at this stage of development, Joseph began to make provision for the people and be a real father to them. He opened the big elevators and sold grain to the Egyptians. How the people everywhere streamed to the elevators for grain! The advice that Joseph had given Pharaoh now showed itself in all its wisdom. The people were cared for, because they did not have to suffer from hunger, and the king also had no reason

to complain, because he not only owned plenty of grain, but also filled his coffers by selling large quantities of it to his subjects. Many a time Pharaoh would pat Joseph's shoulder and say, "You're the man!" And the people praised the prudence of Joseph, the prime minister of Egypt, throughout the land, and looked up to him with a feeling of wonder.

But what of Joseph himself? I imagine he once more thanked God for revealing all this to him and thus making him the savior of the people. No doubt he also showed himself considerate toward the poor. When people had no money to pay for the grain, he would make them a present of some. That is what the painter wants to show here in the picture, where we see Joseph riding through the land in his chariot, distributing grain free of charge to the poor, who are hungry and have nothing to eat. Who has been in need himself, is most apt to show consideration for the need of others. (See illustration 2 in No. 40.) In other respects Joseph also fared well. Pharaoh gave him the daughter of the chief priest for his wife—and the priests were the most distinguished people in Egypt; besides, his wife gave birth to two sons, which greatly added to his happiness. He called the older one Manasseh, i. e., "who makes one forget". "For", said Joseph, "God hath made me forget all my toil." The younger son he called Ephraim, i. e., "doubly fruitful"; for Joseph said, "God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction". There was only one thought which often went through his head and caused him no little care, the thought, "What may have become of my father? Is he still alive How may my brothers be getting along? What may be their attitude of mind by this time? Are they still as full of hatred, envy, and delight over their brother's misfortune as in former years? Do they continue to bring sorrow to the heart of their aged father? Do they show as little love for my youngest brother Benjamin as they did for me?" We would indeed have to consider it strange if from time to time such thoughts

had not occupied his mind. Did he not love his father from the bottom of his heart? Especially since the hard times had begun to make themselves felt Joseph often busied his mind with his relatives in the land of Canaan. He could have sent messengers there and inquired about them; for there was a well traveled mercantile highway which led from Egypt to Canaan, and he, the prime minister of Egypt, had plenty of servants whom he could have sent out on an errand of this kind. But he did not do it. I wonder why not? Perhaps it was because he said to himself, "I shall not interfere with God's ways; if it be His will, He will so lead me as to bring me together again with my father, and let me know whether or not my brothers have experienced a change of heart. "Commit thy ways unto the Lord", this became his motto.

And God did so ordain it that Joseph came in contact with his brothers and with his aged father. It happened like this: The famine did not only affect the land of Egypt; it also spread to the countries round about, including the land of Canaan, where Joseph's relatives lived. Merchants coming from Egypt where they had sold their wares soon spread the news that in the land of the Nile plenty of food could be bought, and so people from all directions began to stream into Egypt to purchase grain, so that they might not starve. We must not imagine that Joseph took personal charge of the sale of grain to the Egyptians and to the strangers that came from other lands. He had plenty of officers under him to attend to these affairs. But he gave them their directions, and at times he also went among the people, in order to find out, from personal observation, whether the sale of grain was being conducted honestly. Following this habit, he one day went out to one of the large elevators that had been erected in the capital city, not far away from the palace that he occupied. There he noticed that a number of stately men entered through the gate which led into the yard surrounding the elevator. Judging from their appearance, they must have

come from a distance. There were ten of them, all older than Joseph, and dressed as people dress in Canaan. He could not help fixing his eyes upon them. The longer he looked at them, the more he became convinced that they were his brothers. He had been away from home now for twenty years, but even as far back as that they had all been grown up men and so they had not changed a great deal since that time. Joseph was able before long to distinguish the one from the other, to say to himself, "This is Reuben, this Simeon, this Judah". So he had a chance to hear from his father; God Himself had provided the opportunity.

But how was Joseph to confront his brothers? Was he to take revenge on them for the evil they had inflicted upon him? The opportunity to do so presented itself. God Himself had given them into Joseph's hand. Who in all Egypt would make any inquiries if he should let them suddenly disappear as they did him, if he should have them cast into prison and even put to death? But no, Joseph knew that it is not right to recompense to anyone evil for evil. In case that he did so, what would become of his father and the others at home, who were waiting for his brothers to return home with something to eat? And how could he thus grieve God, who had led him so faithfully? So Joseph soon discarded the idea of taking revenge on his brothers, although the occasion was most opportune. One who has for so long a time been walking in God's ways, can not all of a sudden stoop so low and act so cruelly. He knew that God saw him, and he quickly decided not to do anything that would displease his God, who had shown him such great kindness. But one thing he made up his mind to do: He was going to put his brothers to a test, in order to find out 1) whether they repented of their former sins, and 2) whether they would again treat his father and Benjamin as formerly. He thought of a plan to accomplish his purpose, and soon found one. What the nature of this plan was, will become apparent as

he carries it into effect. He sent for his steward and said to him, "Take these Hebrew men into my palace!" The brethren were surprised to notice that they were to appear before the man who next to the king was the mightiest man in Egypt. But strange as the command to enter the house of that man appeared to them, they could do nothing but simply to obey it. Joseph himself had meanwhile returned to his palace. When his brothers appeared before him, they followed the Oriental custom and fell down at his feet; for they did not know that it was Joseph. But he had to think of his dreams when he thus saw them lying on their knees. His dream, then, had not merely been the creation of his over-strained imagination, but God Himself had used it to foretell something that was really to happen in the future. Joseph perhaps would have liked nothing better than at once to make himself known to his brethren and to remind them of his dreams. But he did not dare to act upon this impulse, since he wanted to test them and find out whether they had undergone a change of heart. So he pretended to be a stranger to them, treated them sternly, and said to them, "From what land have you come?" They answered, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." Joseph said to them, "You are spies, to see the nakedness of the land you have come." They answered, "No, my lord, but to buy food have thy servants come. We are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not." But Joseph said, "Hereby you shall be proved. you shall not be allowed to depart from here without having brought down to me your youngest brother. Send one of you and let him fetch your brother, and you shall be bound." So he put them all in prison and had them watched closely for three days.

This gave the brethren food for all kinds of thoughts. They naturally thought of their father at home and of all their own people who would be waiting for their return and

who would have to suffer hunger if they did not make their appearance before long and bring grain with them. They probably thought also of Joseph in connection with the cruel treatment that he had received at their hands. On the third day of their imprisonment Joseph had them brought before him again and said to them, "If you are honest men, then let one of your brothers remain bound here in the prison, while you go home with grain for your families. And when you come back, bring your youngest brother with you; thus I shall see whether you are telling me the truth. If your words prove to be true, you shall not die." Then the brethren said one to another "We are verily guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us and would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us." And Reuben added, "Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the lad? But you would not listen to me. Therefore, also, his blood is required." They did not know that Joseph understood them; for he spoke to them through an interpreter. But Joseph understood every word, and since he could no longer control his feelings, he went into another room and wept. While listening to what his brothers were saying, all the misery of his past days again appeared before his soul. That brought tears to his eyes. But he also cried for joy, for he had learned from the words that his brothers had exchanged with one another that they had long since realized how wrongly they had acted toward him, and that they were heartily sorry because of the wrong that they had inflicted upon him. Could not Joseph, therefore, have made himself known to his brothers now? Had they not stood the test? Yes, with reference to the first point. But Joseph did not only want to find out whether they were conscious of having wronged him and felt sorry for it; he also wanted to ascertain how they felt toward Benjamin, his brother, and thus, at the same time, toward their father himself. So he stood by what he had said. He wiped away

his tears, washed his face, and went out again to his brothers. There, in sight of them, he had Simeon bound and led away to the prison. Then he commanded his steward to fill the sacks of the men with grain, to put each man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the long journey. The steward no doubt found these orders to be very strange, all the more, since his master had but recently ordered those same men to be put in prison, and even now had withheld one of their number from them as a prisoner. But he was used to strict obedience and did what he was told.

So the brethren went their way with heavy hearts. True, they brought grain with them, but Simeon was missing, and they knew that their father would be deeply grieved at this. Their message to him was a sad one. We do not know which one of them took it upon himself to tell their father all about what had happened. But it all had to be told. Oh, what a shock it was to their father! But all of them together were even more shocked when they opened the sacks of grain, and found their money in them. "Oh", said they, that man in Egypt will lay this to our charge; when we return to him, he will say, 'You are dishonest men, you did not pay for the grain, but took the money back with you' ". Jacob already took it for granted that Simeon would not be returned, and surmised that Benjamin would also disappear for ever, if he were allowed to accompany his brothers to Egypt. So he exclaimed in words fraught with pain, and accusation as well, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and Benjamin you also want to take away: all things are against me. My son shall not go down with you: if harm befall him by the way in which you go, then will you bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Was it not cruel on the part of Joseph to cause his father and his brothers this seemingly avoidable pain and fright? As for the brethren, they had deserved it a dozen times. Had

they not inflicted upon Joseph much greater ill? They had to learn the truth of these words: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But neither could Joseph spare his father this great pain and worry. It was the only way Joseph had for finding out his brothers' attitude of mind toward Benjamin. You will hear the next time how Joseph, in this respect also, acted in a manner well pleasing to God. Though his plan involved pain and fright, the end of it was to be good and glorious, like the plan that God had followed in leading him. In their case, as well as in his, God's way was going to lead out of the depths of pain and sorrow to the heights of joy, honor, and glory. Today you have seen how this applied to Joseph. The next time I shall tell you how his brothers passed from depths to heights.

42. How Joseph's Brethren Came to Egypt the Second Time.

"You are bereaving me of my children. Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and you will also take Benjamin away", thus the aged Jacob complained when his sons returned from their first journey to Egypt and told him all that had happened there. His paternal heart was most sorely grieved, and if there was anything to comfort him it was the thought that Benjamin was still with him. After Joseph had vanished out of sight, Jacob lavished all the tender affection that he had felt for Joseph upon Benjamin, the younger son of his beloved wife Rachel. For this reason he could not bear the thought of letting Benjamin go to Egypt with his older brethren. Benjamin was now the apple of his eye and the joy of his heart, so that whenever he pondered the question, "Shall I let him go down to Egypt?" he would utter a most decided, "No!" The very thought of it frightened him, and angered him as well. We can imagine how he would then em-

brace Benjamin all the more firmly, determined never to allow him to depart from his presence. As the mother chicken anxiously walks to and fro, or spreads out her wings to protect her little ones, when the hawk appears overhead, so Jacob was anxious about his beloved Benjamin and shielded him most carefully. Not for a moment would he yield to the demand that Benjamin accompany his brothers on their proposed second journey down to the land of Egypt. Did Jacob keep up this unyielding attitude of mind to the very last, or did he finally give in, and allow his other sons to take with them their youngest brother when it became necessary for them to go to Egypt for another supply of grain? This question will be answered today, as I proceed to tell you **how Joseph's brethren came to Egypt for the second time.**

The sons of Jacob had brought a great quantity of grain from Egypt, as much as their drove of asses and camels could carry. They may have thought, "This will be enough to last us until the hard times have ended". And no one wished this more ardently than Jacob, since it would have settled the question as to whether Benjamin would not after all have to be sent along to Egypt with his brothers. Many a time he may, therefore, have said to his sons, "Be saving with the wheat; do not use up too much flour; let us rather eat more of the various kinds of fruit that still can be raised in our land". But in spite of the greatest economy the supply of wheat melted down more and more, and the spell of dry weather remained unbroken. There was no rainfall, and rarely did any dew descend from the cloudless skies, so that the herds also began to suffer, because the grass in the fields could not thrive for lack of moisture. Jacob was thus compelled to face the facts and again to send his sons to Egypt. So he said to them, "Go down to Egypt again and buy some food for us". But they replied, "If thou wilt send thy youngest son, our brother, with us, we will go down". Against this condition Jacob protested with all his migh

and for days he said nothing more about the necessity of going to Egypt for a new food supply. However, the scarcity of food made itself felt so severely, and the danger of being without bread became so apparent, that Jacob once more called his sons together and said to them, "Go down to Egypt and get us some food, lest we die". But he received the same answer. This time Judah was the chief spokesman. He said to his father, "Father, we for our part are ready to obey thy command and go down to Egypt. But the man who sold us the wheat was very stern and said to us, 'You shall not see my face except your brother be with you'". Jacob wanted to know why they had told the man of their having another brother at home. Judah then explained the whole matter and said to his father, "The man asked us directly about our family, saying, 'Is your father yet alive? have you another brother?' How could we avoid answering these questions? Moreover, how could we know that he would say to us, 'Bring your brother down'?"

When Jacob even now refused to change his mind about Benjamin, Judah did two things to make his father pliable. He pictured to him most vividly what a misfortune it would be for him and all the members of his family if food were not speedily secured; he, his children, and his grandchildren would all starve to death. And then he offered to be surety for Benjamin, pledging himself to bring him back home all safe and sound. Said he, "I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him; if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame forever". This shows what a wonderful change Judah had undergone. He had become an altogether different man. Years ago he had felt no compunctions of conscience in selling his brother Joseph into slavery, but now he is ready to sacrifice both life and liberty to save Benjamin. He knew only too well that he had much to make good, and he was willing to do his uttermost in counterbalancing the evil that he had com-

mitted in former years. The firmness and openmindedness of Judah, as well as the impending need, had the desired effect upon Jacob. He finally consented to let Benjamin go to Egypt with the rest of his sons. But he did it with a heavy heart. He also gave his sons special directions for their journey, saying, "Take of the best fruits in the land for a present to the man, a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds; also take double money in your hand, and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it back with you, it may have been an oversight". Jacob did not want to leave anything undone that might help to win the favor of that stern man and prompt him by all means to let Benjamin return home. Having thus done everything he could think of, only one thing remained for him, and that was, to pray for Benjamin and his other sons. Nor did he fail to do this. It was more a prayer than a wish when he sent away his sons with these words, "Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man; and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin". Since he himself could not go with them, he commended them to the safe escort of God. If the gifts that he sent could not warm the heart of the Egyptian, God would be able to direct it even as He directs the course of the water-brooks. In God Jacob put his trust, and it is not likely that he allowed a single day to pass without offering prayer for his sons, remembering Benjamin in particular. With the departure of Benjamin the last and greatest contribution was made to his measure of sorrow. If God had not been his support and comfort, he would have utterly despaired in his sore affliction.

Did Jacob's prayers prove to be of any avail? Let answer be made by the further development of events. As fast as they were able, the brethren hastened down to Egypt. It was a matter of saving their families from suffering hun-

ger and starvation, so they wanted to return home as soon as possible. When their arrival was announced to Joseph, he felt glad. Why? Had he meanwhile learned to regret that he treated them so well the first time and sent them away in peace? Was he elated at the thought that he had them in his power a second time and could take revenge on them for all the wrong that he had suffered at their hands? No, nothing of the kind! His heart leaped for joy because he was to see them again; for after all they were his brothers and in spite of all that had happened he still loved them dearly. He had no other intention than to act in accordance with a word of Scripture that was later written by the apostle Peter, "Do not render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but bless those who wrong you, knowing that you are thereunto called, that you should inherit the blessing". He rejoiced to think that he was again to hear of his aged father, and that he was to see his brother Benjamin. All this made his heart vibrate with joy and gratitude to such an extent that he decided to let his brothers taste his kindliness beyond all measure.

For this reason he said to his steward, "Bring these men into my house, and slay and make ready; for they shall dine with me at noon". The steward must have looked surprised when he heard these orders. What! these Hebrews, these shepherds were to be seated at his master's table and dine with him? But there were other things that he had seen his master do, without being able to understand why he should do them, so he simply went and did as he had been bidden. The brethren were even less able to understand why they should be taken to Joseph's house. They thought it was on account of the money which had been put back into their sacks. In fact, they were very much afraid when the steward took them into the house of Joseph, thinking that he meant to fall upon them and take them for bondmen. So they said to the steward, "O sir, we came down the first time

to buy food, and we indeed left our money here in payment for the wheat that you put into our sacks. But on our return home, when we opened the sacks at the inn, each one of us found his money in the mouth of his sack. We can not tell who put it there, but we have brought it with us, and want to return it to you. Besides, we have with us money for another supply of grain". The steward, noticing their anxiety, did his best to make them feel at ease. He said to them, "Peace be with you! Fear not, your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money". While the steward had thus in the main allayed their fears and forebodings, they did not yet feel entirely glad and secure until Simeon was set free and allowed to join them. They had not had time to exchange any words with him, however, when Joseph already walked into the room. Following the custom of the far East, they bowed down to the floor before him and offered him the gifts which they had brought along for that purpose. But how friendly the man was this time! He really did not act like the same person. He made inquiries about their welfare, especially about their father, saying, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he yet alive?" After they had told him that their father was still alive and in good health, Joseph directed his eyes toward Benjamin and asked them, "Is this your youngest brother?" And before they could say a word in reply, he pronounced a blessing upon Benjamin, exclaiming with emotion, "God be gracious unto thee, my son". Yes, he became so deeply moved that he had to withdraw to a private chamber and weep for a good while. The brethren could not but wonder at his gentleness. His whole changed manner was a riddle to them. But their surprise grew still greater when they noticed that he was having them placed at the table according to their ages. How did this Egyptian know that Reuben was the first, Simeon the second, Levi the third, and so on down to Benjamin? Was he

omniscient? Did he know everything? And why was it that Benjamin was served a portion five times as great as the one that each of the others received? They could not see anything but puzzles in the attitude of Joseph. However, the overflowing friendliness of Joseph made them forget their astonishment, and they took courage to eat of the food that was placed before them. Their appetite grew while they ate, and they made out their dinner fully and completely. But greater than their joy because of the friendly reception and the plenteous meal was the joy that Joseph felt at seeing his brothers seated around his table and being able to act as their host. His face fairly beamed with joy and gladness.

Children, if you want to learn what it is not to render evil for evil, not to strike back when one has been struck, to reward evil with good, to forgive from one's heart those by whom one has been most grievously offended, then look upon this dinner that Joseph and his brethren took together, he as their genial host and they as his welcome guests. Let us all follow the example of Joseph in the way he behaved toward his brethren on this occasion. Do not render evil for evil. Do not strike back when anyone strikes you. Forgive one another as Joseph forgave his brethren. Also be kindly affectioned toward one another, and try your best to live together in peace and harmony. For truly does the poet say:

"How good it is for brethren,
Who know each other well,
In unity together
On this fair earth to dwell.

As dew from lofty Hermon
Into the valley flows,
So God upon the brethren
His choicest gifts bestows."

As for Jacob's prayer, it certainly was granted. God was indeed with Jacob's sons, and gave them mercy before the

supposed Egyptian. But would they be permitted to bring Simeon and Benjamin back to their father? Of this we shall hear the next time.

43. How Joseph Made Himself Known to His Brethren.

There were two things that Joseph wanted to find out with reference to his brethren, before making himself known to them. He desired to know, in the first place, whether they had come to a knowledge of their sin and experienced a change of heart, and, in the second place, whether they took the right attitude toward Benjamin, so that, instead of leaving him in the lurch, just to save themselves, they would risk something for him or even suffer on his account. Not until these two points had been cleared up, was he going to tell them who he was. With regard to the first of these two points, he had already gained considerable knowledge; for when the brethren stood before him the first time, and he had Simeon bound before their eyes, they had said to one another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us". It must be remembered, however, that the brethren made this confession to one another, and not to Joseph, while much depends upon our making confession to the one whom we have wronged. As for their attitude toward Benjamin, Joseph had not yet learned anything certain about it. Therefore he felt constrained to prolong his test. So I must tell you today **how Joseph continued to test his brethren, and, after they had stood the test, made himself known to them.**

Full of joy the brethren had started out on their homeward journey. They had been so much afraid, and now everything had passed off delightfully well. It had been their remarkable privilege to have a regular feast in the house

of this Egyptian nobleman, who in all Egypt was second only to Pharaoh. Sometimes they could not help thinking it was all a beautiful dream. However, they had really sat at the table of the most prominent man in Egypt, and he had been to them a most genial host and talked to them in the kindest terms; and here they were on the way home, with Simeon in their midst and Benjamin also accompanying them. Who could have been happier than they? They were already imagining how glad their father would be to see them all again.

All of a sudden, however, they saw a cloud of dust in the road back of them. It came nearer to them very swiftly, and it was not long until they noticed a man on horseback. He rode at a rapid pace, and had soon caught up with them. It was the steward of the mighty Egyptian in whose house they had dined so happily the day before. While on that occasion he had been so very friendly, comforting them on account of the money and leading them into his master's house, he now looked very stern. His face even wore an angry expression, and they could surmise nothing good when in a thundering voice he called to them, "Halt!" Nor were they mistaken. Hardly had he come into their immediate presence, when he yelled at them, "Why have you rewarded evil for good? Since last evening my master's cup has been missing, out of which he drinks and which he uses when out of the movements of the water or wine he wishes to divine the future. You have stolen this cup. I would not have thought that of you. My master treated you so hospitably, and here you act toward him like a band of thieves, stealing from him his drinking cup, which he prizes so highly".

How the brethren were frightened by these words! And yet—they had a clear conscience. Each knew of the other that he would not be capable of doing anything so mean. So they replied most firmly and decidedly, "Why dost thou say these words? No, we are not thieves. Not one of us has

ever committed theft. Did we not return the money that we had found in our sacks? By that you can tell that we are honest men. Come and search all our sacks, and if the cup is found in the sack of any one of us, let that one be put to death, besides, we will all be the slaves of thy master". They were so sure of their innocence that they had no hesitation in using such strong language. But the steward said, "No, my master is not so inhuman. However, this is what he said to me: 'He with whom the cup is found shall be my slave; the others shall be blameless, and may continue on their way home' ".

Then each one of the brethren hastened to his sack, took it down from his beast of burden, and opened it for inspection. The steward now began to search the opened sacks. He started to look for the cup in Reuben's sack, but found no trace of it there. He next tried Simeon's sack, with the same result. Levi, Judah, Dan, Napthali, Gad, Ashar, Isachar and Sebulon had each their turn, but the cup failed to make its appearance. The steward finally went for Benjamin's sack, digging into the grain with his arm, and making a most thorough search for the cup. The brethren knew that Benjamin would have been the last one to steal it. They already began to breathe easier, for Benjamin was the last one whose sack the steward examined, and they were convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that he could not have proven himself to be a thief. They had it at their tongue's end to say, "You see, we told you that we were innocent; who has a right to hold honest men in suspicion?" Just then the steward took a shining object out of Benjamin's sack, held it up and exclaimed, "This is the silver cup of my master". On hearing this, the brethren stood speechless. They all looked as pale as death. Benjamin, in particular, began to shiver, and tears probably started to roll down his cheeks. He knew that he was innocent; the brethren also knew it. But neither Benjamin nor they were able to prove

it. They could not explain how the cup had gotten into Benjamin's sack. Some secret enemy of theirs must have played them a mean trick, they thought; but who was this secret enemy? They were completely puzzled. But one thing was at once evident to them: this affair would mean a great change in their career; they would all be thrown into dire misfortune. Or were they to see Benjamin bound and led away as a slave, while they retied their sacks and resumed their homeward journey? This they would have done if they had been the same kind of men that they were twenty-two years before, when they, in their hardheartedness, sold Joseph into slavery. But now they did not even think of doing any such thing, thus showing that meanwhile they had undergone a thorough change. They loved Benjamin too much to let him alone in a state of slavery, and they also thought too much of their father to bring him the information, "Benjamin has been retained in Egypt, he is to spend the rest of his life as a bondservant". They lost no time in making up their minds to this: "Back to that mighty man in Egypt! With him we shall plead in behalf of our brother. We shall try to have him set Benjamin free, and if that is impossible, we shall all remain as his slaves, rather than leave Benjamin alone". Yes, this was their firm resolution; for they had really become different men and sincerely loved their youngest brother.

So they, one and all, put their sacks back upon the donkeys, and returned to Egypt. That was a sad procession, quite different from the one that only a few hours ago had come the same way, though headed in the opposite direction. What a sudden change this was from joy and elation to sorrow and consternation! Then they were filled with thoughts of home and kindred, to whom they would soon return, now they said to themselves, "There is no hope of our ever seeing home again, or being together once more with our father, our wives and our children; in all likelihood we shall remain

life-long slaves". For the more they reflected on their situation, the more they were compelled to admit: "We have no way of proving to the man our brother Benjamin's innocence; we had better not try it at all, but simply offer ourselves to him as his slaves". All this could not but remind them of Joseph, the agony of whose soul they would not heed when he begged them not to send him away into slavery. They were now to pass through the same experience. No one would have pity on them and turn their misfortune. It became clear to them that there is á God who hunts down the sinner and will not let him escape unpunished.

When they were led into Joseph's house, they threw themselves down at his feet. He, however, addressed them most sternly, saying, "What deed is this that you have done? How could you requite all the good that you received from me by stealing my silver cup? For one of you surely stole it". Then Judah, as spokesman of the others, said to him, "What shall we say? We are innocent; but how can we clear ourselves? We are unable to prove our innocence to thee. What is happening to us now, is a punishment for our former sins. God has found out these our earlier misdoings, and is punishing us for them. And we are willing to bear the punishment. Behold, we will all be thy servants, thy slaves". Thus Joseph's brethren had also confessed their sin to him, and while they had not described the nature of their sin, they felt true contrition in their hearts, and were ready to suffer all the consequences of their misdeeds as well deserved. But Joseph replied, "God forbid that you should all be my slaves, but the man with whom the cup was found shall be my servant. As for the rest of you, arise and return in peace to your father".

What were the brethren to do now? What was there left for them to do? They had all returned to the city with their brother and offered to become slaves for Benjamin's sake, so that he might not be left in the lurch. But their

offer had been rejected. Was there any other way that they could pursue in the effort to gain the release of their brother Benjamin and have him restored to his father? Judah knew another way. He stepped up to Joseph and said to him, "Oh, my lord, be not displeased if I say a word in thine ears. Hear me, I pray thee, before thou passest thy final judgment. Upon thine inquiry we told thee about our father. He is old and many have been the burdens that he has had to bear in the many years of his life. He has also had his sorrows, the greatest of which came to him when his second youngest son, whom he loved most, was taken from him. For one day this son did not return to him, and he was informed that a wild beast had torn his son to pieces. That was a great shock to him; we were afraid he would not outlive it; again and again he would complain of this sad misfortune. Meanwhile he began to bestow his affection upon his youngest son, Benjamin. He was now the comfort of his old age. Never would he allow himself to lose sight of him. Without him he believed it would be impossible for him to live. That is why Benjamin was not allowed to go with us when we came to Egypt for the first time, to buy some grain. But thou, my lord, didst declare, 'Ye shall not again see my face except your youngest brother be with you'. Oh, if thou only knewest what an effort it cost us to persuade our father to let Benjamin come with us this second time! Not until hunger compelled him did he, with a heavy heart, give his consent to Benjamin's going with us. But I went surety for Benjamin; I solemnly promised my father to take care of our youngest brother, and to bring him safely home again. If we should return home without him, that would be more than our father could stand. Such a sorrow would cause his death. What should I do if I had to witness this calamity? Oh, my lord, thou perhaps hast a father, imagine, if thou canst, whether it would be possible for thee to abandon thy youngest brother and thereby to break thy father's heart.

No, thou couldst and wouldst not do it. Therefore, my lord, grant my request, and keep ME here as thy slave, letting Benjamin with the others, return to our aged father. I also have a wife and children at home, but I am willing never to see them again if thou only wilt set Benjamin free".

Thus spoke Judah. It is not likely that he had ever before, in all his life, delivered a speech of such length. But the love which he felt for his father and his brother made him forget all timidity in the presence of the proud Egyptian, and so inspired him that he could speak in the most appealing manner. There may have been a moment of utter silence in the room when Judah had finished his eloquent plea. The brethren fairly held their breath as they watched Joseph's eyes, eager to read in them an intimation of the kind of answer that he would give their brother Judah. They did not have to wait long for Joseph to express himself. For when he heard his brother Judah speak thus, and noticed how every word that he spoke was prompted by the love that he cherished for his father and his brother, a love so strong and fervent as to surpass all of Joseph's expectations, he could not but say to himself, "Verily, my brethren have come to be altogether different men, and have acquitted themselves with the very highest credit in the test that I gave them; not only have they acknowledged and confessed their former sins and shown their willingness to suffer God's punishment for their misdeeds, but they have also shown that they love their father and their brother Benjamin with all their heart". And his heart so yearned for his brethren that he could no longer refrain himself. He therefore ordered all the Egyptians who were with him to leave the room. As soon as he was alone with his brothers, he made himself known to them. Weeping aloud, he exclaimed, "I am Joseph, your brother!" But if he had been of the opinion that they would be comforted by these words, he was soon to discover that he had misjudged them. For if the lightning had

struck immediately before their eyes, they could not have shown themselves more startled than they appeared when they heard Joseph say these words. They started back and were so badly frightened that they could not say a word in reply. What they thought silently was thus if this man was Joseph he would most surely punish them for having sold him into slavery. But Joseph himself had no such thoughts in his heart. He had long since forgiven them their sin, and he wept because he was overwhelmed by the joy of seeing his brothers again, and because he was so glad to think that they had stood his test so well and undergone such a thorough change for the better. His motto was, "Do not return evil for evil", and again "If you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you your trespasses". Therefore he continued to say to his frightened brethren in the Hebrew language, "Come near unto me, I pray you; I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. And now, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me hither; for God sent me before you to save life. Hasten, and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not; and there I will nourish thee, for there are yet five years of famine'". Then I suppose he told them many things in explanation of his behavior toward them, saying, in substance, "Up to this moment I only pretended to be a stranger to you, because I wanted to put you to a test and find out whether you had really become different men; I myself gave my steward orders to put my cup into Benjamin's sack, in order to find out how you would now behave toward Benjamin and your father. In this test you acquitted yourselves with credit, so that I can now trust you to the fullest extent and also make full provision for you in the remaining years of famine". Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; he also kissed all his other brothers. Then they began

to realize that they had nothing to fear from him, and summoned up courage to talk with him, as their brother. And do you know what probably was the first thing they said to him? It was this: "Forgive us, Joseph, for being so mean toward you as to sell you into Egypt". And this petition did not only please Joseph, it was also pleasing to God in heaven; for He Himself says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy". Joseph no doubt renewed to his brothers the assurance that he had forgiven them most heartily. Nor could they be truly happy until they were convinced of this; for one can only be thoroughly happy when all the old sins are covered up and one is on the right terms with God and man.

On the following day the brethren departed for home, to bring their aged father the joyful news. Acting upon Pharaoh's orders, Joseph sent along wagons to bring his father and his whole family to Egypt, that he might make provision for them; he also gave them a goodly supply of grain, so that they might not suffer want in any particular until they could come to Egypt, with all their children and with all their herds. Furthermore, Joseph loaded the wagons with many valuable presents for his father, gave each of his brothers a festal garment, and Benjamin five such garments, besides three hundred pieces of silver. Then he dismissed them, that they might hasten and get their father. As they started out, he admonished them, saying, "See that ye fall not out by the way". He meant that they should not start a quarrel about who was most to blame for their having sold their brother into slavery. He gave them to understand that they were all guilty, but they were also to remember that he had forgiven them all their guilt, and to let bygones be bygones. They were to believe that in a deeper sense it was not only they but God who had brought him to Egypt, so as to train him, cause the betterment of his brethren and save the lives of many people. Joseph wanted them to realize,

as he did, that the counsels of God are wonderful and always end well.

How happy the brethren must have been as they were wending their way home! Their hearts had been rendered light by the knowledge that their old sin, which had poisoned their life and kept them in a state of unrest, was blotted out. It is that way with us too, children. When we have committed sin, our conscience is aroused, and that puts an end to all peace and joy of heart and mind; nor should it be otherwise, or we would take our sins too lightly. Unforgiven sin should be felt as a heavy burden. But if we repent of our sins, if we feel heartily sorry for our misdoings, and then go to father, to mother, to the teacher, or to God and ask them to forgive us, and by them are assured of their forgiveness, we become light-hearted once more, knowing that all wrongs have been righted and all discords harmonized. Let us bear this in mind: If we come to God, saying:

"Father, unto Thee I fly,
As Thy child appealing.
No one else on earth have I
Who can grant me healing".

He will make Himself known to us, as Joseph made himself known to his brethren, and say to us, through His word, "Yes, I am your Father, and forgive you all your sins for Christ's sake". Then, and not till then, all, all is well with us.

44. How Joseph Cared For His Father in Egypt.

Joseph had made himself known to his brethren. What was more natural for them now than to think of their father at home? What a joy it would be for him to hear that Joseph was still alive and lord of all Egypt! And what greater service could Joseph render to his father than to have

him come down to Egypt and there to take care of him? The years of famine had not yet passed by, but several more of them were still to be expected. So let me tell you this morning **how Joseph had his father come to Egypt and provided for him there.**

The brethren had left Joseph and were on their way home. No doubt, they traveled more speedily this time than on their previous homeward journeys; for they had a great message of joy to convey to their aged father. The nearer they came to their home, the more they urged the asses and the camels to move along with double speed. At last they could see the tents coming into view in which Jacob and his people lived. Soon they also caught sight of their father; he may have been sitting outside of his tent and watching for the return of his sons. It stands to reason that his thoughts were with them constantly. "Will Benjamin be brought back to me all safe and sound? Will they also bring Simeon when they return home?" These were the thoughts of the venerable old man as he sat there before his tent. Busy with such thoughts, he scarcely noticed the arrival of his sons. But hardly had they come near him, when they sprang from their beasts of burden, hurried into his immediate presence, and exclaimed, "Joseph is still alive! Joseph is still alive! He is lord of all Egypt!" However, if they had imagined that he would jump up from his chair for joy, they had been mistaken. The aged father had indeed heard their shouts about Joseph, but he did not believe them. He had definitely given up all hope of ever seeing Joseph again, and had formed the habit of regarding him as dead. How should he have come to life again? That was more than he could get through his head. Then they all went up to him, Benjamin, Simeon, Judah and all the others, and said to him, "O father, do believe us; thy son is really alive. and has been made a mighty lord, to rule over all Egypt" And Judah added, "See, father, this ring on my finger and

this golden chain about my neck are the gifts of Joseph; he made me a present of them". And Benjamin went on to say, "Look, father, these five festal garments Joseph presented to me, and these golden bracelets are also his gifts; and, behold, the wagons over there, as well as the donkeys, are all loaded with wheat and with costly robes, with golden ornaments and rare fruits; Joseph sends all these things to thee, and lets thee know that he is still alive, and that he wants thee to come down to Egypt and meet him there". Jacob's eyes began to brighten when he saw all these rich presents; his spirit revived, and, arising from his seat, he exclaimed, "It is enough; Joseph, my son, is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die".

And now he could not hear enough about Joseph; every word that Joseph had spoken was of value to him; he even made inquiries concerning the smallest details. The brethren, on their part, did not hesitate to tell him everything that had happened, and how Joseph had made himself known to them. They confessed to him that Joseph had not been rent in pieces by a wild beast, but that they had sold him to the Ishmaelites. They related to him most minutely how the Ishmaelites had taken Joseph to Egypt, how Joseph had fared in Potiphar's house and in prison, and how it happened that he was released from prison and summoned to appear before the king. Nor did they omit telling him that Joseph had forgiven them their grievous sin and assured them that he was willing to forget all the wrong they had done him. And how did they most likely conclude their narrative? To be sure, they begged their father's pardon for having sinned against him, and he granted them his pardon most willingly. True, their sin had been great and grievous; but it was evident that God Himself had brought good out of all the evil that they had committed. They had been led to repent of their sins and to experience an inner cleansing. Joseph's dreams had been fulfilled and he had, in God's school, learned

to trust in Him without reserve; he had been made prime minister to Pharaoh, and through Him God meant to save many people during the famine that was sweeping over Egypt and all the countries round about. Jacob thus was made to see how wonderful the ways of God are and how happily they end. That made it easy for him to forgive his sons all the wrong that they had done. How could he have borne them any ill feeling, since he plainly saw how God had made everything work together for good?

By the repentant confession of the sons and the hearty forgiveness of the father the past was brought to a close, and all began now to direct their thoughts toward the future. No one was more in haste now than the aged father. His sons just could not prepare for the journey fast enough to suit him. He kept saying to them, "Let us hurry! I can not tell how long I may continue to live; I want to see Joseph before I die". Finally all was in readiness for their departure. It was a stately train that got into motion. In all there were 70 souls, to that size Jacob's family had by this time increased. Besides these, however, there were hundreds of man-servants and maid-servants, together with all their children. The camels and asses, the sheep and cows were hardly to be counted, not to speak of the tents, the rugs, the clothes, the fruit supply, and other things, too numerous to mention. The wagons that Joseph had sent were all heavily loaded. The most comfortable wagon was reserved for the aged father Jacob.

Peculiar thoughts must have filled Jacob's heart as he thus departed from the land of his fathers. He could not leave it without thanking God for all that He had given him, and without asking Him for His blessing. For he knew that Canaan, and not Egypt, had been promised to him and his descendants. So when he came to the borderland of Canaan, he built an altar and made an offering to God. As for God, He fully understood what Jacob's sentiments were; therefore

He said to him, "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will also surely bring thee up again". Jacob now continued on his journey as one who felt abundantly comforted, for he had been relieved of his only remaining care, in as much as he knew that God was going with him, and that none of His promises were to become void, even though Jacob was leaving the promised land. Henceforth Jacob could look entirely to the future and allow everything else to pass out of his mind aside from the hope of seeing again his beloved son Joseph.

When they arrived in Egypt, Jacob sent Judah ahead, to notify Joseph of his coming. How glad Joseph was when he saw Judah and heard of him that his father was on the way. As quickly as possible he had his chariot put in readiness, and went up to meet his father. Oh, what a meeting that must have been! (Picture!) Jacob opened wide his arms to embrace Joseph, and Joseph fell on his neck and wept a good while. For about twenty years they had not seen each other, and the father had believed the son to be among the dead. Not often enough could they look into each other's eyes. Joseph kissed the forehead of his father, so deeply furrowed by care and sorrow; the dear eyes, the sallow cheeks, and the mouth that had so often conversed with him in the happy by-gone days. After that they probably sat beside each other, hand in hand, while through their hearts passed the thought, "The Lord is wonderful in counsel, and leads everything to a happy end; we know that all things must work together for good to those who love God", and Joseph resolved anew to put his trust wholly in God, who leads His own in ways that may seem dark, but that are all bright and luminous in the end. Jacob's deep longing was satisfied, so that he could say, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, and know that thou art yet alive".

But Joseph may have said to him, "No, father, thou shalt not yet die, but live many years more and take pleasure in seeing all thy children about thee". And at once he began to provide for his father in the very best way. His declining years were to be as the quiet and sunlit evening. That part of Egypt which was best adapted for becoming the abode of Jacob and his sons, with their many herds, was the land of Goshen, and this was the land that Joseph asked Pharaoh to give him as a home for his father and his brothers. Here they were in Egypt, near Joseph, yet apart by themselves; here they could live in their accustomed manner, yet they were amply provided with all they needed, having large grazing places for their herds and receiving an abundant supply of grain from Joseph's large granaries. Joseph also took his father and showed him to Pharaoh; consequently, he was not ashamed of him, as children often are when they have risen high in the world. He did not try to hide his humble descent, but was proud of his father. He did not only love him with all his heart, but he also honored him, even in the presence of the king. Children, if you want to know how to keep the fourth commandment and treat your parents in accordance with it, only recall how Joseph cared for his aged father. Pharaoh also was glad to see Joseph's father and asked him most kindly about his welfare. Among other things, he said to him, "How old art thou?" Jacob answered, "The time of my life is one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life. They have not attained to the years of my fathers in their pilgrimage". Jacob had fitly spoken thus. Compared with Abraham, whose age was one hundred and seventy-five years, and with Isaac, who even lived to be one hundred and eighty years old, Jacob's years were few; and they were evil also, for he had experienced enough of evil in his life. Only think of what he had to stand while he was with Laban, and what heartache his own sons caused him. But all that was over now,

and Joseph cared for his father as well as any son could possibly care for his parents in their declining years. No wonder, then, that Jacob wished his son well and was more than proud of him. In order to show Joseph how dearly he loved him, he blessed his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, assigning to each of them a portion of the land of Canaan, just as he did to each of his own sons. While he was not going to interfere with God's plans and impart to Joseph the blessing of the firstborn, as he had probably intended to do in former years, Joseph was nevertheless, in his two sons, to have a double heritage. That is why he said to him, "Thy two sons shall be my sons, just as really as Reuben and Simeon".

But however well Jacob fared in Egypt during the seventeen years that he was privileged to live there, he never for a moment forgot that Canaan, and not Egypt, was the land God had promised to him and his offspring. He therefore had Joseph swear to him, that he would not bury him in Egypt, but in Canaan. He said to him, "Swear unto me that thou wilt not bury me in Egypt, but in the burying-place of my fathers". And Joseph did so. Nor did Jacob forget that from his offspring the Savior was to be descended, and that in Him all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. So when shortly before his death he blessed all his sons, he said to Judah, "Judah is a lion's whelp . . . the sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh (= the bringer of peace) come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be". By this he meant to say, "The descendants of Judah shall some day be kings over the people that are descended from me, and one of his offspring shall be the Savior, who is to be king over all nations". Judah had once upon a time so bravely vouched for Benjamin's safety, and taken his part before Joseph, that he was to be the one from whose descendants the Savior was to come forth. Thus Jacob, amid the temporal blessings that he enjoyed during

his stay in Egypt, prior to his death, did not forget the mission which God had assigned to him. When he died, his eyes looked into the future. Though he died in a strange land, he trusted that some day God would lead His people back to the promised land and fulfill all the promises that He had given to him, to his father Isaac and to his grandfather Abraham. He held fast to the firm belief: some time in the future the Savior will come, whose mission will consist in bringing all nations to peace with God.

When Jacob had died, Joseph fell upon his father's face, wept over him, and kissed him; he knew what a great loss he had suffered by the death of his father. After that he ordered the Egyptians to embalm his father's body. That was an art which the Egyptian doctors understood particularly well. They could embalm a dead body in such a way that it remained intact for a long while. I once saw an Egyptian corpse, known as a mummy, which was several thousand years old. In the case of Jacob the embalming was necessary for the reason that Joseph was to take his father's body to Canaan. At the present time, when any of our relatives die, we, especially the women, wear crape for a certain length of time; in some countries the whole people observe a time of mourning when the king or some member of his family dies. Now, since Joseph, next to Pharaoh, was the first man in all Egypt, and since Jacob was his father, the Egyptians observed seventy days as a time of mourning after Jacob had passed away. But when that season was past, Joseph took the remains of his father to Canaan. There was a very large funeral procession. The remains were laid in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron (map!), where Abraham and Isaac already lay buried.

How would Joseph now act toward his brethren? Had he simply treated them so well out of regard for his father, or had he forgiven them so fully that he no longer harbored any thought of punishing them? His brothers feared the

former, and said to one another, "Joseph will now hate us and requite us all the evil that we did unto him". They expressed this fear to Joseph through a messenger, and begged him to forgive them all the evil they had inflicted upon him. They even went and fell down before his face, and said, "Behold, we are thy servants". But Joseph wept when he noticed that they thought him capable of planning to take revenge on them, now that his father was no longer alive, and he said to them, "Fear not; for am I in the place of God? You thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good". Then he comforted them and spoke to them in kindly terms. He had gained too deep an insight into God's ways and saw too plainly the ruling hand of God in all his affairs, as to cherish any thought of avenging himself by maltreating his brothers, especially since everything had worked together for good. In the midst of his misery he had stayed with God and done nothing contrary to His will; so he wanted to stay with Him also in the days of his prosperity; and he knew only too well that God is not pleased to see men recompensing to anyone evil for evil. Like his father, Joseph clung to the hope that God would lead his descendants, as well as those of his brothers, back to Canaan. So he said to them, "God will surely bring you out of this land into the land that He swore He would give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And when that time comes, take my earthly remains with you, that they may rest in the land of my fathers". His brothers did accordingly. When Joseph had died at the age of one hundred and ten years, they laid his body in a coffin and put it in a place where no air could touch it. There it was to stay until God would bring them back to Canaan.

Thus the life of Joseph closes with what made it great in the sight of God, with an evidence of his faith, his firm hope and trust in Him whose providence had shaped his entire career. In God he trusted when he was sold by his brethren; in God he trusted when Potiphar threw him into

the dungeon; in God he trusted when the butler had ungratefully forgotten him. And in his firm hope and trust he was not disappointed, since the counsel of God is wonderful and always carries things to a glorious end. This is what we are to learn of Joseph's history, so that we may also trust in God, so that we may also hold fast to this firm hope when it seems as if God had utterly forsaken us. Children, though God may lead you in ways that seem dark, put your trust in Him; and though His help may be withheld a long time, do not cease trusting in Him; in the end, all will be well. The story of Joseph teaches us, and we want to learn from it, the great truth expressed in these lines:

"If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
And hope in Him through all thy ways,
He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days:
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the rock that naught can move".



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GREAT SEA
MEDITERRANEAN
EGYPT
& THE SINAI PENINSULA
CANAAN
Wilderness
of Paran
RED SEA
HOREB


Cappadocia
ASSYRIA
COUNTRIES ADJOINING CANAAN
ILLUSTRATING THE CAPTIVITIES OF THE JEWS
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 40 60 80 100 120 140

CANAAN
as divided among
THE TWELVE TRIBES

Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30

Cities of Refuge are underlined

Zidon
Zarephath
TYRE
Hareth
Ladder of Tyre
ASHER
ACCHO
Rimmon
ZEBULON
Hannaton
Jokneam
Megiddon
ISSACHAR
Dothan
Jezreel
Ramoth Gilead
MANASSEH
Succoth
Jabbok
Penuel
Mahanaim
Jogbehah
Pella
Bozrah
Betharam
Shechem
Gilgal
Mt Gerizim
Tirzah
Rakkon
JOPPA or Japho
Bene Berak
Jehud
EPHRAIM
DAN
BENJAMIN
JERICHO
Ashdod
Ashkelon
Gedor
Eglon
Marcshah
JUDAH
Lachish
Debir
Kattath
Hebron
Aroer
Arad
Adadah
City of Salt
Beersheba
Rehoboth
SIMEON
Ziklag
Zephath
Moreshah
Gerar
Ar of Moab
Kir of Moab
Aroer
Japhi
Borrah
THE SALT SEA
THE DOMINIONS OF DAVID & SOLOMON

PALESTINE

FROM THE RAISED MAP
constructed from the Surveys of the
PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND.

Secretary to the Fund

Scale of Miles

20 0 20



PALESTINE
illustrating
THE NEW TESTAMENT

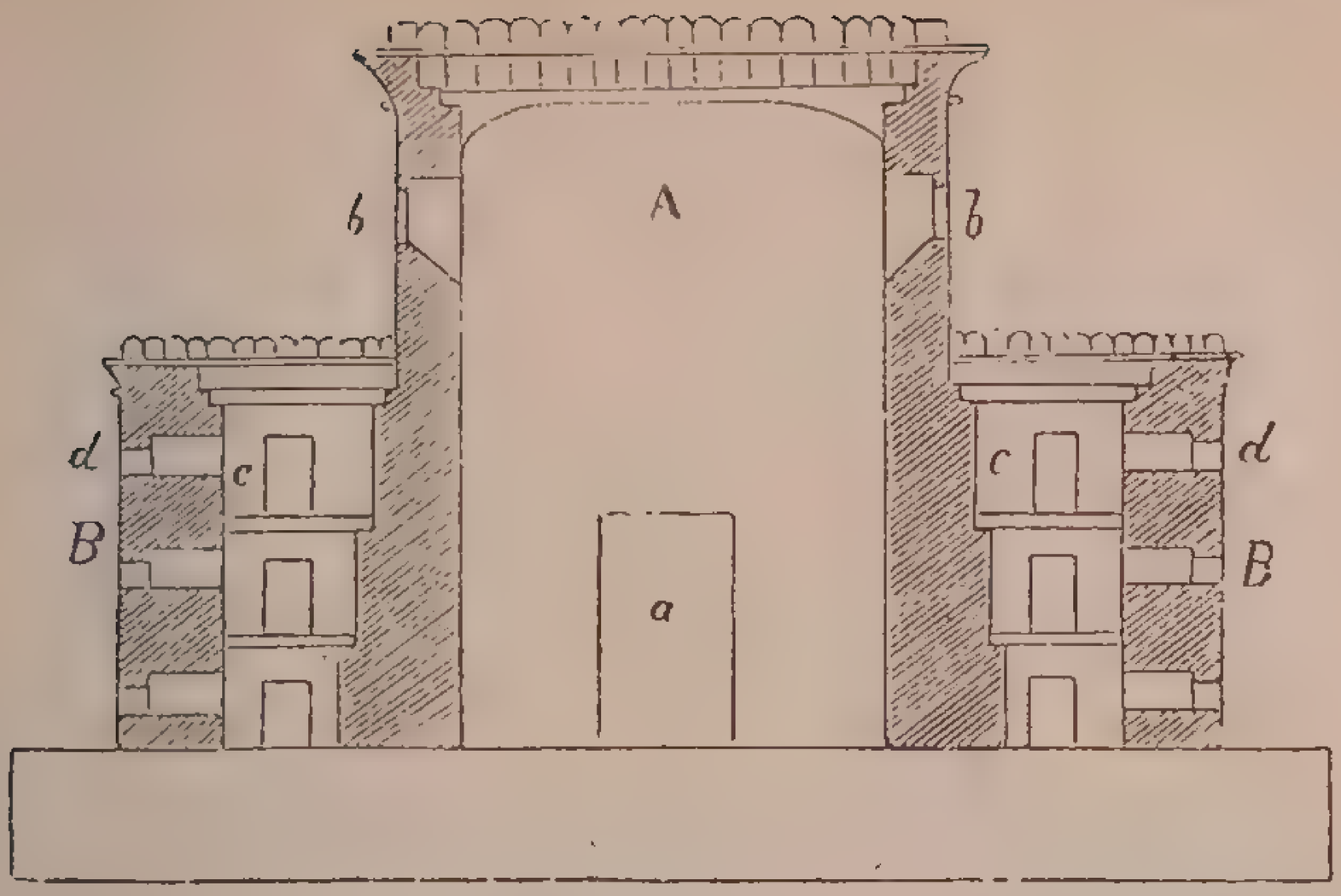
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30

Longitude East 35° of Greenwich

PALESTINE
under
THE MACCABEES

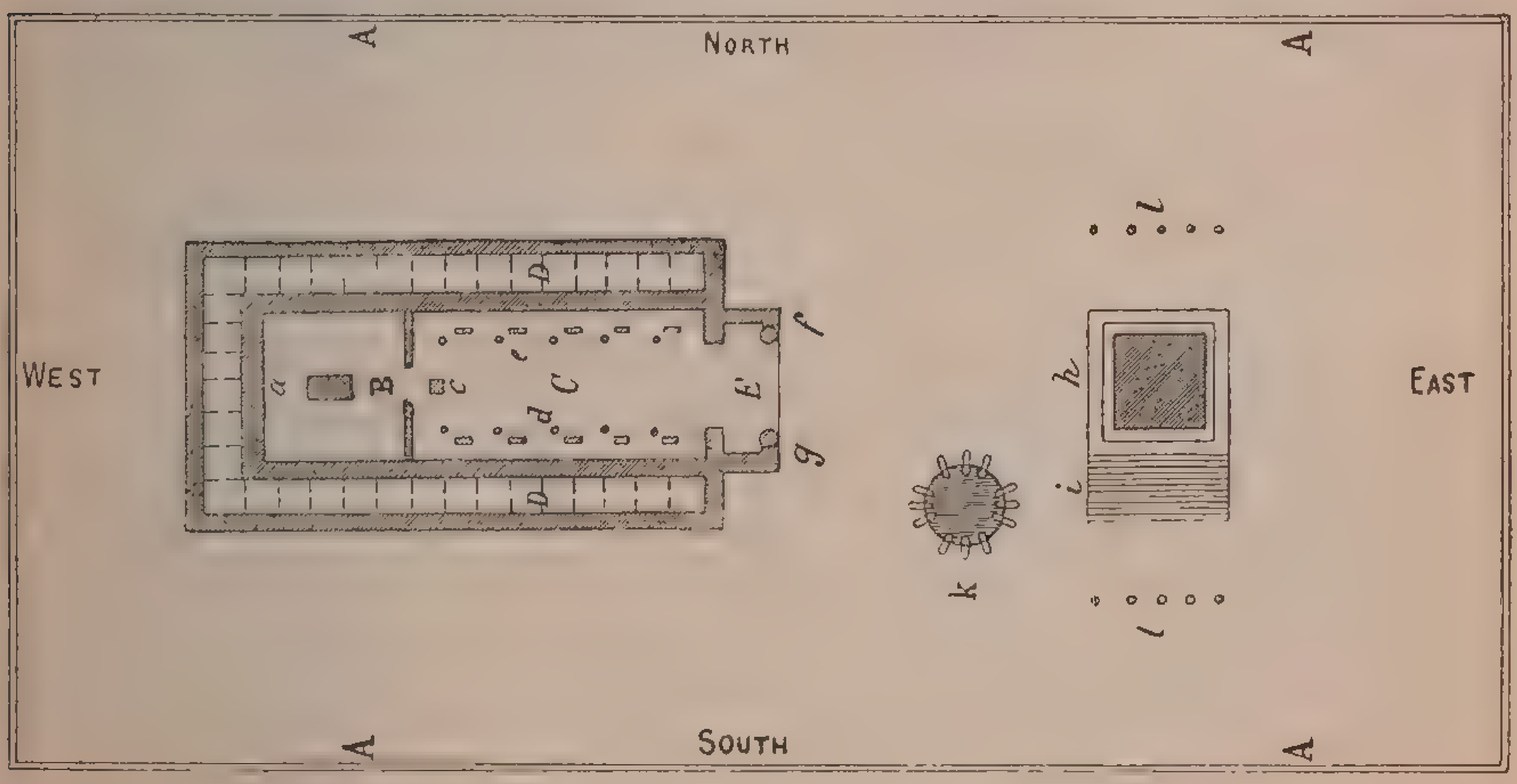

D
E
F
Mount Scopus
BEZETHA
AKRA or Lower City
TEMPLE
MORIAH
ZION
or Upper City
Fish Gate
Fountains
Tyropœon
Valley
Gihon
Fountain Gate
Siloam
Kidron
Valley
Mount of Olives
To Bethany
To Jericho
ANCIENT
JERUSALEM


Ishuth
L I L E E
Ramah
Hannathon
Chorazin
Bethsaida Julias
G O L A N
O W E R
Hukkok
Capernaum
SEA OF GALILEE, L. OF GENNESARET, SEA OF CHINNERETH
TIBERIAS
Hammath
Magdala
Arbela
Rimmon Dimnah
Cana of Galilee
Adami
Plain of Zaanaim
Kedesh
682 ft.
Tabbathah
Shihon
Dabaroth
Jabneel
Mt Tabor
Zaphon Amathus
Nain
Endor
Adamah
Hill of Moreh
Shunem
Anaharath
Ibleam
Gamala
Aphek
Hippos
Alena
Gergesenes
Gadara
D E C
B A T A N E A



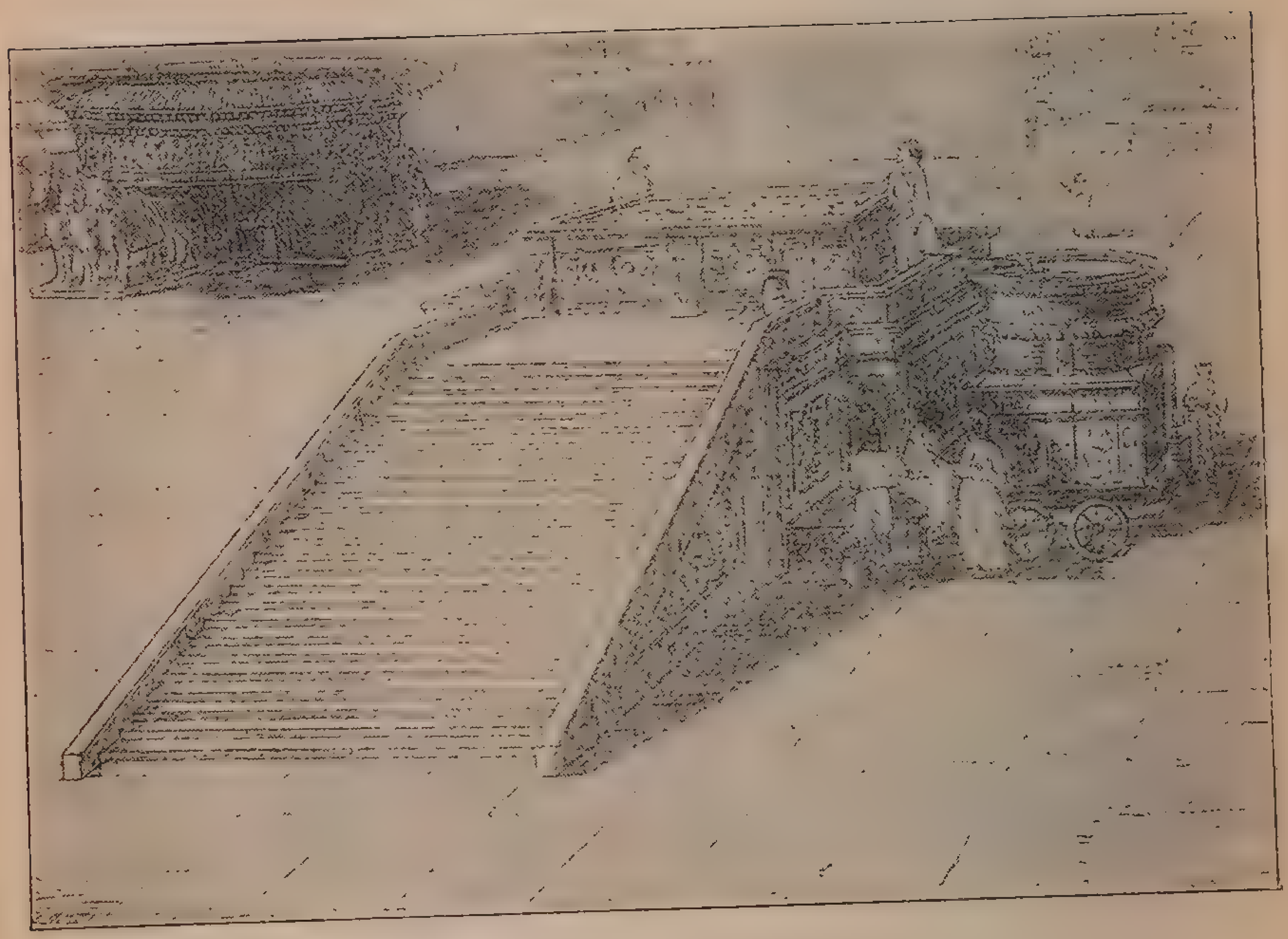
Profile of the Temple of Solomon.

A. Inner Half of the Holy; a. Door to the Holy; C. Windows of the Holy; B. Three Stories of rooms joined to the lower part of the side walls of the Holy; c. the rooms; d. the windows for the rooms.



Ground-plan of the Temple of Solomon.

A. The inner Court or the Court of the priests; h. Altar of burnt offering; i. Ascent leading to the altar of burnt offering; k. The molten sea (a basin of brass for the washings); l. Two rows of five moveable basins for washings. B. The Holy of Holies; a. The Ark of the Covenant; C. the Holy; c. The altar of incense; d. Two rows of five golden candlesticks; e. Two times five tables for the shew-breads. E. The Entrance Hall of the Holy; f. and g. Two pillars of brass.



Altar of Burnt Offering.

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